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The University of Southern Mississippi

BENEATH THE SURFACE:
AMERICAN CULTURE AND SUBMARINE
WARFARE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

by

Matthew Robert McGrew

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate School
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts

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August 2011

ABSTRACT

BENEATH THE SURFACE:

AMERICAN CULTURE AND SUBMARINE WARFARE

IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

by Matthew Robert McGrew

August 2011

Cultural perceptions guided the American use of submarines during the twentieth century. Feared as an evil weapon during the First World War, guarded as a dirty secret during the Second World War, and heralded as the weapon of democracy during the Cold War, the American submarine story reveals the overwhelming influence of civilian culture over martial practices. The following study examines the roles that powerful political and military elites, newspaper editors and Hollywood executives, and ordinary citizens – equal players in a game larger than themselves – assumed throughout the evolution of submerged warfare from 1914 to 1991. In each period, cultural discourse about the vessels propelled the on-the-ground realities of implementing a practical, yet acceptable, approach to an often misunderstood weapon system.

DEDICATION

For Bill and Geneva McGrew and Betty Dolan – I wish you were here
to share in my joy.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Throughout the process of writing this thesis, I have happily incurred a great many debts. First, and foremost, a hearty “thanks” to my awesome committee, Drs. Andrew Wiest, Michael Neiberg, and Andrew Haley. All three gentlemen scholars guided me with constructive criticism and sage advice from the project’s conception through its completion. I also would like to thank Drs. Amy Milne-Smith and Pamela Tyler for their outside perspectives and insights during the early “roughing out” process. I would be remiss if I did not extend my gratitude to my good friend, Joe “The Man” Geiger, director of the WV State Archives for his help in researching the *USS West Virginia*; Marc Levitt, archivist at the Robert C. Byrd Center for Legislative Studies; and Wendy Guley of the Submarine Force Archives in Groton, CT. And, I would be a fool not to thank the best department secretary in the world, Shelia Smith – thanks, Babe, for always taking time to steer me through the murky waters of grad school bureaucracy.

Without the help from a great group of friends and scholars, I doubt very much that I would have wound up at Southern Miss, or happily trudged on during the past two years. To Drs. Daniel Holbrook, Montserrat Miller, and Phillip Rutherford, you guys gave me the tools of history and taught me how to use them; I am eternally grateful for your mentorship and friendship. During a research trip to Groton, CT, my good friend – and fellow slave to maritime history – Michael Tuttle, was kind enough to put a roof over my head and give me my first lobster dinner. Thanks also go to fellow MA students: Nancy “Penny” Nichols, my cultural history comrade in arms; Denise Carlin, whose skepticism of cultural history continues to keep me on my intellectual toes; and to Chad Boykin, an excellent partner in crime for long road trips to see David Allan Coe and

Merle Haggard. Special thanks are due to a close group of friends in Hattiesburg, who have seen me at my best and worst: Wesley Joyner; Christian Pinnen; Rob Thompson; Rob's Wife (sorry, Corrina); and Tim Hemmis. To my best friend, Andrew Pinnick, what else can I say but, "Gypsies, Tramps, and Thieves?"

Finally, without the love and support of my family, I would be nothing. Mom, you have always supported me and my ideas – no matter how crazy either one was at the time. Dad, you gave me the love of history and the passion to seek it out, thank you. Thanks to Angie, for helping me fill out more FASFA forms than either one of us care to remember. To my brother, Doug, thanks for being the big brother who showed me how to work with my hands. To my twin, Sarah, thanks for all the awesome times we'll never remember. To my sister-in-law, Shannon, and my brother-in-law, Joey, I'm so glad both of you are part of our family. To my crazy nephew, Zephyr, and the newly-arrived Alexandra, I love you both. Lastly, to my grandfather, Wendell Dolan, thanks for all the "Granddaddy Cookies" and the years of unselfish love.

It is customary for the author, at the conclusion of academic acknowledgments, to accept full responsibility for any errors found within the work; such is not my style. Instead, allow me to offer a few words of assurance to anyone whose contributions, either by ignorance or absent-mindedness, I have omitted: no one will ever associate you with any shortcomings found within this study. Readers will justifiably place responsibility on my shoulders and, regrettably, on those whom I mentioned above. To those of you who fall into the latter category, please accept my most humble apologies. Thanks.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On a bright, clear morning in October 1990, a crowd of political and military leaders gathered together in Georgia with members of the press and anxious onlookers to catch a glimpse of the United States Navy's latest Trident-missile submarine. Christened *West Virginia* a year earlier by Mrs. Erma Byrd, wife of the Democratic senator from the ship's namesake state, the submarine was the picture of patriotic pride. The vessel sat tall in the water, imposing and powerful despite the ornate bunts and streamers of red, white, and blue that decorated her decks. A military band played in the background as well-dressed gentlemen and ladies mingled with the *West Virginia's* officers and crew. Underscoring the grandeur of the occasion was the clear presence of high security on land and sea marked by armed sentries and high-speed boats with mounted machine guns.

Amidst the whirlwind of socialite banter and military ceremony stood a young family of little or no consequence to the crowd that surrounded them. Arrayed in their middle-class Sunday-Best, the father and mother flanked both sides of their twelve-year-old son, staring in wonder at the mighty spectacle that unfolded before them. A chance invitation from a well-placed friend had brought them from their home outside a small town nestled among the West Virginia hills.

For the family, it was indeed a special day. After a private tour of the submarine, the proud parents snapped photographs of their son shaking hands with the ship's master – the boy's gaze directed at the shiny medals that covered the captain's chest. Later in the day, the wife took care as she selected and purchased three navy-blue sweatshirts that bore the ship's emblem. With each garment came a small note that read, "Because of

your generosity, a member of the crew will receive a shirt just like this one.” The name *West Virginia* had deepened the family’s sense of state and national pride, but this small act of kindness provided an intimate connection to the men who manned the submarine.¹

Throughout the twentieth century, American culture dictated the country’s policies regarding submarine warfare. The scene at the *West Virginia*’s commissioning is but a snapshot, isolating one moment in the progression of ever-changing cultural perceptions. Broadly speaking, Americans experienced the realities of submarine warfare by filtering events through three dominant perceptions: as victims, as aggressors, and as noble defenders. In the First World War, the country reeled in the wake of German Unrestricted Submarine Warfare (USW) that took the lives of innocent bystanders. From the interwar period through the end of the Second World War, Americans accepted submarines as part of the country’s navy, but adopted a hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil approach to the vessels – particularly during the country’s own prosecution of USW against Japan during the Pacific War. When the possibility of Soviet nuclear aggression threatened the United States during the Cold War, submarines rose to new prominence as protectors of freedom that employed weapons of deterrence. In each period, culture defined submarines and their potential uses.

Although connections between perceptions of submarines in the Cold War and the earlier world wars remain unexplored, the discrepancy between First and Second World War US Naval policy has not gone unnoticed by military historians. Author J.E. Talbott believes that America’s use of the vessels between 1941 and 1945 represents “one of the ironies that has marked the history of modern warfare.”² Yet, despite the irony, many of

¹ From WHF Papers and Photographs, private collection.

the arguments about submarine warfare advanced since 1945 have been simplistic. Samuel Eliot Morison's sweeping, fifteen-volume naval history of the Second World War, for example, concluded that the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor had "absolved the United States from observing any rule restricting methods of naval warfare..."³ Morison gave birth to what this study refers to as the Retaliatory School – the belief that the change from submarine victims to aggressive submarine users occurred overnight due entirely to Pearl Harbor. Subsequent studies by Theodore Roscoe (1949), W.J. Holmes (1966), and Ernest Andrade (1971) reinforced the Morison thesis of retaliation.⁴ Even Clay Blair's *Silent Victory*, heralded as the quintessential work on America's submarine war, subscribes to Morison's thesis.⁵ All historians who have followed Morison's lead point to two pieces of evidence they claim proves the retaliation argument: a remark made by Rear Admiral Richmond K. Turner on 7 December 1941, and testimony offered at Nuremberg by Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz. Both men stated matter-of-factly that the commencement of USW by the United States came as a response to Pearl Harbor.⁶

Over the past thirty years, as the US Navy declassified more official pre-war and wartime documents, historians have grappled with the validity of the Retaliatory School's thesis. One of the earliest published refutations of Morison's argument, J.E. Talbott's

² J.E. Talbott, "Weapons Development, War Planning and Policy: The US Navy and the Submarine, 1917-1941," *Naval War College Review* 37, (May/June 1984): 53-71.

³ Samuel Eliot Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II: Vol. IV, Coral Sea, Midway and Submarine Actions* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1949), 190.

⁴ Theodore Roscoe, *United States Submarine Operations in World War II* (Annapolis: US Naval Institute Press, 1949); W.J. Holmse, *Undersea Victory: The Influence of Submarine Operations on the War in the Pacific* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966); Ernest Andrade, Jr., "Submarine Policy in the United States Navy, 1919-1941," *Military Affairs* 35, no. 2 (April 1971): 50-6.

⁵ Clay Blair, Jr., *Silent Victory: The U.S. Submarine War Against Japan* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1975).

⁶ Talbott, "Weapons Development," 54.

1984 article on weapons development and war planning, dismissed the premise of retaliation outright. After considering the connections between US policy, naval strategy, and weapons development, Talbott argued that “unrestricted submarine warfare was the probable outcome of decisions made as early as 1919 and pursued throughout the interwar period.”⁷ Talbott went on to write that the issuance of orders for USW on 7 December “seems less a decision than a foregone conclusion.”⁸ Not so polemic as Talbott’s article, Edward Miller’s ground-breaking examination of war planning during the interwar period, though adherent in part to the Retaliatory School, did note that talk of implementing a USW policy began filtering through official communications prior to the Pearl Harbor attack.⁹

More recently, naval historians have become less definitive in their arguments regarding USW than scholars like Morison and Talbott. Craig Felker’s 2007 investigation of the navy’s strategic exercises between 1923 and 1940 reads like the work of an author who wants to have his cake and eat it too.¹⁰ On one hand, Felker argues that, even on the eve of the Second World War, the US Navy continued to ignore the strategic importance of submarines. However, Felker also notes that US submariners had become, through simulated fleet engagements, just as aggressive as the main battle wagons, making the move to USW after Pearl Harbor “but a small operational leap.”¹¹ Just as

⁷ Ibid., 56.

⁸ Ibid., 67.

⁹ Edward S. Miller, *War Plan Orange: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan, 1897-1945* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 320.

¹⁰ Craig C. Felker, *Testing American Sea Power: U.S. Navy Strategic Exercises, 1923-1940* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007).

ambiguous in its stance regarding the Retaliatory School as Felker's work is Joel Ira Holwitt's 2009 *Execute Against Japan*.¹² Though Holwitt presents readers with a carefully nuanced account of the United States' move away from the long-standing Freedom of the Seas policy toward the 7 December order to conduct USW against Japan, his work ultimately has two contradictory themes. First, *Execute Against Japan* argues that because the United States had no serious intention of using USW, the navy failed to develop tactics for submarines that were appropriate to the realities of commerce raiding. The failure, contends Holwitt, created cautious submariners who bungled the initial months of the USW campaign – an argument which is a mainstay of the Retaliatory School's thesis. Holwitt's thorough archival research, however, also unearthed material that indicated the navy's predilection for submarine-based commerce raiding vis-à-vis USW ran far deeper than previously believed. *Execute Against Japan* demonstrates the biggest problem facing historians researching this topic: how to reconcile two contradictory theses supported by such substantial archival evidence? The following study argues that the use of culture to examine American submarine warfare reveals a larger trend of perception-driven policies that span the entirety of the twentieth century.

In other areas of historical inquiry, authors facing a multitude of solid, albeit exclusive, arguments for causality have found that such opposing forces often share roots in the unspoken cultural assumptions of society. Most notably, Kristin Hoganson's *Fighting for American Manhood* used culture, specifically assumptions about gender, to

¹¹ Ibid., 74.

¹² Joel Ira Holwitt, *Execute Against Japan: The U.S. Decision to Conduct Unrestricted Submarine Warfare* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2009).

reexamine the causes of the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars.¹³ Despite the fact that “culture might only complicate our understanding of historical causality, for it is never determinative,” Hoganson grounded the known causes of war within the larger context of contemporary culture.¹⁴ Through this process, the author argued that seemingly divergent motives for war stemmed from cultural beliefs and perceptions of gender. Similarly, Noel Perrin’s explanation as to why Japan effectively gave up the gun between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries depends largely on an understanding of a culture rooted in traditional Samurai swordsmanship.¹⁵ The studies of both Hoganson and Perrin reveal that an understanding of the broader cultural context that frame military decisions can yield fruitful results. It is with this premise that this study begins.

Because historians rarely agree on a single transmitter of culture, the phenomenon itself, as it appears in this study, deserves attention. In this matter, the recent work of European historians offers some useful conceptualizations. Carl Schorske’s study of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna uses contemporary architecture, music, intellectual theories, and art as a lens through which he examines political history.¹⁶ Viennese elites, contends the author, created cultural representations of their own political perceptions and realities exclusively for an audience of their social peers. Conversely, Vanessa Schwartz broadens this rather limited use of culture in her work on Parisian mass culture of the same time period by

¹³ Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 2-14.

¹⁵ Noel Perrin, *Giving Up the Gun: Japan’s Reversion to the Sword, 1543-1879* (Boston: Nonpareil Books, 1979).

¹⁶ Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-De-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981).

finding the mass audience.¹⁷ The emergence of what she labels as “spectacular realities” (morgue viewings, panoramas, and early cinema) throughout *fin-de-siecle* Paris gave the city’s diverse social classes a common place to mingle and merge into a greater mass culture. Additionally, Schwartz argues that the seemingly separate experiences of both the spectacles’ creators and audiences were in fact inextricably connected to one another.

In both cases, the author’s conceptualization of culture engages the issue of agency, yet alone, neither approach fully satisfies the needs presented by a study of submarine culture in America. Therefore, this study employs a synthesis of the two approaches, effectively democratizing agency between the masses and individual actors. Schorske restricts creative and consumptive agency to the culture of Viennese elites. If applied to this study as is, his approach would discount the role of average Americans in creating and shaping cultural discourse. Similarly, a strict application of Schwartz’s methodology, while giving agency to America’s masses, would limit the ability of smaller, more powerful groups of individuals to influence discourse at any given time. Jeffrey Verhey’s methodological approach in *The Spirit of 1914* lends itself well to such a synthesis advocated in the following study.¹⁸ In examining the creation and manipulation of a mythical, unified pro-war atmosphere throughout Germany during the July Crisis of 1914, Verhey’s argument rests upon evidence found in the editorial stances of contemporary newspapers. The ability of the press to both create and reflect popular opinion enables access to both the mass audience and the individual.

¹⁷ Vanessa R. Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-De-Siècle Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

¹⁸ Jeffrey Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth, and Mobilization in Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

As the culturally imagined identity of submariners changed during the twentieth century, so too did the American discourse of submarine warfare. In this vein, a theoretical model constructed around the fictional *Nautilus* from Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* provides a means for understanding the cultural discourse about submarines in twentieth-century America. Set in the 1870s, the novel begins with a flurry of reports that some unspeakable sea creature has attacked numerous ships making trans-Atlantic voyages. The book's narrator, Professor Aronnax, is a marine biologist by training who agrees to accompany the United States navy on a "monster hunt." Aronnax falls overboard along with his research assistant and Canadian harpooner Ned Land, when the sea beast attacks his ship. Drifting on the open ocean, the three men find themselves beside their quarry, only to discover that the monster is a ship. Taken aboard by the vessel's crew, Aronnax and the others become the captives of the *Nautilus* and her mysterious master, Captain Nemo.

The perception of Verne's *Nautilus* remains fluid throughout the entire work, implying that the ship's character depends on the shifting qualities expressed by a living being, namely her master, Captain Nemo. Without a captain or crew, *Nautilus* was an inanimate hunk of metallurgy and posed no threat to society. With the revelation that the supposed sea monster is actually a man-made craft, the narrator, Professor Aronnax, concludes that the ship's persons are "[n]o doubt some new sort of pirates, who explored the sea in their own way."¹⁹ Exclaiming that "it is an infamous shame" that "not one of [the crew] ha[d] the politeness to answer" questions posed by the professor and his companions, harpooner Ned Land shouts that the crew most certainly hailed "from the

¹⁹ Jules Verne, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1970), 39.

land of rogues!”²⁰ Continuing in his description of the ship, the professor makes repeated references to the *Nautilus* as a prison. Yet after Captain Nemo formally introduces himself and offers the prisoners “liberty” to wander about the submarine (though they are never to leave), the reader, through the scientific eyes of Aronnax, becomes aware of the scientific marvel that is *Nautilus*: a vessel powered entirely by electricity derived from sea water.²¹

The creation and alteration of American submarine discourse depended on the identity of those persons using the vessels. In the fictional example, the emotions *Nautilus* evoked merely reflected that aspect of Nemo’s personality that Verne wished to describe in a given passage. Near the book’s end, the mysterious captain becomes a figure of compassion and devotion. After a band of giant squids kills the ship’s lieutenant, the professor tells the reader that Nemo “gazed upon the sea that had swallowed up one of his companions, and great tears gathered in his eyes.”²² Continuing his description of life on board the ship, the professor provides an essential element to the “Vernian” model of discourse creation:

Captain Nemo entered his room, and I saw him no more for some time. But that he was sad and irresolute I could see by the vessel, of which he was the soul, and which received all his impressions. The *Nautilus* did not keep on in its settled course; it floated about like a corpse at the will of the waves. It went at random. [Nemo] could not tear himself away from the scene of that last struggle, from this sea that had devoured one of his men.²³

²⁰ Ibid., 43.

²¹ Ibid., 60-4.

²² Ibid., 271.

²³ Ibid., 271-2.

From this perspective, the connection between the discourse of submarines and the perceived character of the individuals running them becomes inextricably connected.

Using the cultural identity of submariners as a determinant of discourse creation and manipulation requires an acknowledgement that a cultural “audience” plays an equally important role in the process. Similarly to Vanessa Schwartz, Modris Eksteins argues that without the reaction of an audience, “spectacles” lose their meaning.²⁴ The “Vernian” model illustrates this relationship well. The civilized, scientific side of Nemo, and consequently that of the *Nautilus*, only presents itself to Professor Aronnax, whose own interests and cultural appetites allow room for the ship’s transformation from “prison” to “marvel of the modern world.” In fact, the professor admits that Nemo touched Arronax’s “weak point” by offering to share in the scientific findings afforded by submarine exploration.²⁵ It is only after this admission that the professor describes, in extensive detail, the technological breakthroughs Nemo has achieved. Ned Land’s perception, on the other hand, of the *Nautilus* as a “prison” only changes at times when his personal fate and that of the ship intersect. Even then, it is arguable that Land only suspends, rather than alters, his prior belief. Clearly, the ever-changing nature of discourse depends on the variables associated with both the “viewer” and the “viewed.”

Though informative and enlightening, analyzing the creation and evolution of cultural discourse through the use of the above model only tells one side of the submarine story. A study of an imagined reality that ignores the factual reality implies through omission that the two do not relate to one another. Kathleen Canning’s *Languages of*

²⁴ Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989).

²⁵ Verne, *20,000 Leagues*, 52.

Labor and Gender, much like Jeffrey Verhey's work, demonstrates that cultural discourse and reality interact with and react to each other frequently.²⁶ Simply put, discourse derives from a given aspect of reality, the established discourse then informs the actions and reactions of society to events, and the process continues indefinitely. Based on this principle of interaction, this study will explore the points at which American submarine discourse and reality intersect and diverge. The resulting "culturally thick" description of American submarine warfare will place this subject in a broader historical context than allowed by more "traditional" military history studies. To that end, the study uses a wide array of primary sources – ranging from print media to personal correspondence and journals to official communiqués and policies to popular contemporary films – that captured the subtle cultural perceptions of submarines throughout the twentieth century.

Rather than the narrow, policy-based reasons for USW offered by previous historians, this study uses the lens of culture to argue that the United States Navy's road to USW in the Second World War was intensely complex and far from certain. Furthermore, by extending the scope of research beyond the realm of the two world wars and into the Cold War, the following work proposes that the story of American submarine warfare came full-circle in the twentieth century. At the outbreak of the First World War, strategists regarded the vessels as suitable only for costal defense. Public disdain for German commerce raiding and international loss of life nearly outlawed submarines several times during the interwar period. Yet after a brief bout of ruthless

²⁶ Kathleen Canning, *Languages of Labor and Gender: Female Factory Work in Germany, 1850-1914* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002).

war in the Pacific, the weapons slowly emerged as the harbinger of peace and freedom in the Cold War, proving that the best defense was an imposing offense.

Though arranged thematically according to the three dominant cultural identities of submarines during the twentieth century, the chapters in this study follow a generally chronological order. Chapter one takes the reader from the First World War through the London Naval Treaty of 1930, highlighting the crests and troughs of cultural discourse surrounding the “Despised Weapon of the Hun.” In an effort to establish the context in which American policy makers acted during the interwar years, this section leaves the discussion of on-the-ground decision making throughout the 1920s and 1930s to the following chapter. Working within a discourse dominated by Germany’s use of submarines forced the interwar US Navy to find a legitimate way to incorporate the vessels into an existing Mahanian doctrine of large fleet engagements. Chapter two explores the creation of a military arm that became as “Silent as the Grave” during the war of strangulation against Japan. Additionally, this chapter chronicles the disconnect that developed between wartime cultural discourse and reality. Finally, the third chapter reveals how an ever-shifting post-war memory of the weapon’s use between 1941 and 1945, mixed with Cold War culture and the changed nature of the Nuclear Navy, established a discourse that enveloped the “Flagship of Freedom” with patriotic pride as demonstrated by the case study of the *USS West Virginia*.

The debate between Retaliatory School historians and their intellectual opponents has led to an academic dead end. By limiting their focus to whether or not US officials and military leaders had a desire to conduct USW against Japan in a potential Pacific war, scholars on both sides have overlooked the larger issue of submarine warfare evolution

throughout the twentieth century's entirety. Essayist John Gierach has mused that "making peace with someone tends to bring them into the fold, but before you can make peace, you have to have a little war."²⁷ The American cultural experience with submarines from the First World War through the Cold War did just that, for beneath the surface of implemented policies churned a turbulent sea of opposing currents born from the diverging interests of naval theorists, politicians, and public opinion.

²⁷ John Gierach, *Sex, Death, and Fly-fishing* (New York: Simon and Schuster/Fireside, 1990), 180.

CHAPTER II

DESPISED WEAPON OF THE HUN

She [a submarine] will never revolutionize modern warfare...but for coast defense purposes she is of inestimable value. ~Superintendent of the US Naval Academy²⁸

[E]xperience has shown that its scope as a weapon of attack...is definitely limited...[and] as far as the experience of this war goes[,] the submarine is not destined to revolutionize naval warfare... ~*Living Age*, 1915²⁹

The widespread use of submarines during the First World War revolutionized the cultural conception and physical conduct of warfare in the twentieth century. It brought to light the terrible and destructive force that walked hand-in-hand with modern technological and industrial progress. For contemporaries who experienced, observed, and/or read about the psychological and physical terrors birthed by the Great War, scientific advancement came at the cost of humanity's compassion for fellow human beings. The cultural reaction to and discourse about submarines in the United States between 1914 and 1930 demonstrates the lasting effects the weapons exerted over modern warfare and society despite an early belief to the contrary. The poetic loss of innocence attributed to the Great War extended beyond the imagined realm of humanity's soul and into the world of naval warfare. The myth, and later the memory, that the submarine destroyed the notion of honorable naval warfare took hold between 1914 and 1918, gaining momentum during the Versailles Peace Conference. While the ambivalent face of technological progress did receive some blame for the new dishonorable warfare,

²⁸ Quoted in Blair, *Silent Victory*, 9. Though Blair does not give a specific date for the above quote, he placed it in his discussion of *fin-de-siècle* U.S. naval policy.

²⁹ "The Future of the Submarine," *Living Age*, October 23, 1915, 242.

most responsibility fell squarely on the shoulders of Germany. Media reports confirmed and reinforced this sentence during and after the war, giving rise to what this study identifies as the first culturally dominant identity of the submarine in twentieth-century America: Despised Weapon of the Hun.

It did not take long after the German declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare (USW) on February 4, 1915 for America to protest the targeting of civilians aboard ships. While the legacy of the *RMS Lusitania* sinking in May of 1915 endures in today's society, the spark that first set the American tinderbox aflame came over a month before. On April 10, a German U-boat torpedoed and sank the *RMS Falaba*, killing over one hundred civilians, including one American. A survey of national newspaper reports following the incident reveals the voracity with which the country's citizenry reacted to the sinking: "a crime against humanity;" "a frenzied beast at bay;" "not war, but murder;" "brutal;" "cold-blooded;" "cowardly;" "atrocious;" "assassination;" "it tends to make the stories of other German atrocities credible;" "shocking bloodthirstiness;" "a massacre;" "uncivilized;" "piracy;" "barbarism;" "a humiliation to all the world;" "wickedness such as the history of war will find it difficult to match."³⁰ *Literary Digest* went on to report that the justification offered by the German navy – that the death of a relative handful of non-combatants paled in comparison to the millions of people starving at the hands of the British naval blockade –fell on the ears of a deaf American public.³¹

³⁰ Quoted in "When the Torpedo Kills Non-Combatants," *Literary Digest*, April 10, 1915, 789-90. This study uses *Literary Digest* as a lens into contemporary newspaper reports as the digest drew on a multitude of politically diverse newspapers in an effort to tell all sides of a given story. When a report appeared in the journal, it served as an indication that the subject of the story concerned most media outlets throughout the United States.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 790.

The same issue of *Literary Digest* included several articles, cartoons, and photographs that painted Germans in a negative light, maintaining the persona so richly described in the publication's lead story. The German starvation tales met with skepticism and a cartoon poking-fun at a rail-thin "German Michel" who exclaimed, referencing the supposed 200-gram bread ration, "Well, I shall have to pull in my belt another hole."³² This farcified image juxtaposed a story on the opposing page that told of the British disgust with reports of "pampered" German POWs following rumors that English POWs, held by Germany, were the objects of hardships and atrocities. A cartoon from London's *St. James Gazette* accompanied the story, synthesizing its two main points. In the depiction, two captured German officers sat in lounge chairs, with feet propped up, while English valets lit pipes and cigars and served beer steins from silver platters. An angry John Bull stood in the background with clenched fist as he muttered, "I don't want to treat them as they do our prisoners in Germany – but this is going a bit too far."³³ Though this and other images discussed later in the study did originate from outside the United States, the fact to remember is that the American pressed syndicated foreign reports, pictures, and cartoons, bombarding the public with war rhetoric.

Yet another article from the same issue of *Literary Digest* continued the anti-German motif, though more subtly on this occasion. The discussion of "German War-Professors," meaning members of Germany's pre-war academic community who served in the army, appeared innocent enough on the surface. After all, the reputation of the belligerent country's intellectual elite, particularly at this time, carried with it a certain

³² Ibid., 798.

³³ Ibid., 799.

cultural sophistication. Highlighting the reopening of the Brussels Museum under German occupation seemed a logical way to present the civilized side of the Hun. The covert jabs at the German character, however, came briefly in the captions that accompanied photographs of the museum's new curators:

“German Soldiers Amid Belgian Art.”

The Brussels Museum was reopened on February 7, the first time since the war began. Two thousand Germans, soldiers and civilians, visited the place. Those before us are inspecting the work of Belgian sculptor, Meunier. Some Belgians came to see if their treasures were still safe.³⁴

Taken by itself, this last jab seems like a hollow cultural quip. Yet, when placed in the context of the issue's other fierier language, the line assumes a variety of meanings: at best, Germans became petty thieves; at worst, they embodied absolute evil. According to the “Vernian” model, submarine warfare itself, at this time, became evil because it reflected the dark character of its master – Germany.

Oddly enough, the event that popular memory erroneously associates with America's entry into the First World War received a milder treatment – at least in terms of adjective use – in the nation's press. The front page news of the *Lusitania* sinking brought with it calls for action. Former U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt reached out to his former constituents, arguing that America owed quick and decisive action, “not only to humanity[,] but to our own national self-respect.”³⁵ An accompanying Chicago *Tribune* cartoon showed Uncle Sam, Norway, and Sweden violently flailing in a boat

³⁴ Ibid., 806.

³⁵ Quoted in Ibid., 1133.

named *Neutrality* as a German torpedo struck the hull.³⁶ The Springfield, Massachusetts *Republican* warned that the successful sinking of *Lusitania* might encourage Germany to bolster its campaign of USW, “utterly regardless of the murderous deterioration in the moral character of the warfare which submarine attacks on passenger-ships involve.” The *Republican* concluded that the “inhumanity” of the submarine made it an “assassin.”³⁷

Addressing the seemingly contradictory nature of contemporary media reports surrounding *Falaba* and *Lusitania* and popular memory requires a multi-faceted explanation. Because the two disasters occurred within the span of approximately one month, newspaper editors undoubtedly needed a fresh way to spin the latest German atrocity.³⁸ The progression of human emotion suggests that the first sinking jolted the American public, requiring them to find the appropriate language with which they could engage the issue publicly. With a mastery of this new language, America met the second sinking with a firm resolve to act.³⁹ Furthermore, the need for “action today” came, most assuredly, from the rise in non-combatant fatalities, particularly in terms of American lives lost. The torpedoing of *Lusitania* killed nearly 1,200 people, including 128 Americans. Compared to the *Falaba* incident, wherein only one U.S. citizen died, *Lusitania* struck a nerve in the American public, the pain of which did not dissipate in the months that followed.

³⁶ Ibid., 1134.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Though there were other sinkings, for the purposes of this chapter the author chose to focus on the different American reactions to *Falaba* and *Lusitania*, respectively.

³⁹ For a complete development of the war’s impact on rhetoric, see Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

As Germany's policy of USW continued throughout the summer of 1915, American anti-submarine rhetoric deepened, placing more pressure on President Wilson to act. The front-page story of *Literary Digest* from July 31, 1915 featured a "History of the First Year of the War," and discussed German double-talk of bowing to Wilson's demands for the cessation of USW. Depictions of Uncle Sam reflected the perception that Germany had abused America's good faith. In one cartoon, the bloodied hand of the country's patriarch reached out to Germany's clenched fist, the caption noting that "...he still offers to shake hands." Similarly, a drawing appeared of Sam examining his hole-ridden hat and remarking that, "They may have been unfortunate accidents, but the marksmanship is deadly."⁴⁰ In both cases, the wounds and tears alike bore the names of sunken liners like *Lusitania*, *Gulflight*, *Frye*, and *Cushing*.

In September 1915, Americans reveled in what they believed marked a diplomatic win for the neutral countries of the world. The news of German Ambassador Johann von Bernstorff's assurance to the Wilson administration that submarines would no longer fire on merchant ships without warning brought a sigh of relief to the nation's public; newspaper headlines proclaimed "Germany Yields to Wilson" and "Submarine Warfare a Failure."⁴¹ In October, *Living Age* published a British article entitled, "The Future of the Submarine."⁴² The anonymous author described the impracticality of sustained USW, arguing that "...because of the inferiority of the submarine [to surface vessels]...the present German submarine campaign has been checked."⁴³ While the article offered no

⁴⁰ "History of the First Year of the War," *Literary Digest*, July 31, 1915, 198.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 509-572.

⁴² "Future," *Living Age*, 240-43.

evidence for such inferiority, reason suggests that British hubris as the world's mightiest sea power informed the author's conclusion. Similar articles praised White House efforts, while simultaneously assuring the public that even without such diplomatic intervention, USW could not endure. The time when the submarine menace ruled supreme, it appeared, had come to peaceful conclusion.

And yet, the official end of USW on September 1 did not disperse the air of apprehension that continued to hang over the United States. Ever the hard-liner, Theodore Roosevelt continued to speak out against Germany, insisting that merely "stop[ping] the policy of assassination" merited no gratitude on America's part.⁴⁴ Germany's true motivations for halting USW became a point of debate in the media, bolstered by reports in the British and French presses that the Hun had lulled America into a false sense of security. *Literary Digest* published a German photo entitled, "Tirpitz in a Tender Moment," that showed the Grand Admiral holding a young child. Though the caption scoffed at the admiral's reputation as a "baby killer" who loved "piracy and murder," it still noted that he had a zeal for "vigorous submarine warfare" that German Chancellor von Bethman Hollweg managed to curb in the wake of American protests.⁴⁵ The implication that Tirpitz and his fleet of U-boats waited for the right time to renew the devouring of civilian liners pervaded contemporary newspapers. A cartoon in London's *Westminster Gazette* typified this belief, chronicling a brief conversation between the Kaiser and von Tirpitz:

⁴³ Ibid., 242.

⁴⁴ "German Yields to Wilson," *Literary Digest*, September 11, 1915, 509.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 830.

von Tirpitz – “*Boo-hoo! They won’t let me be frightful any more!*”

The Kaiser – “*Nevermind, Tirpy! You can make a ‘mistake’ now and again, and Bernstorff can apologize.*”⁴⁶

The “Summer of the Submarine” had done its damage. American faith that Germany would keep its promise to conduct proper submarine warfare ran thin. And so, the country anxiously waited as the war continued.

The sudden arrival of U-53 in Newport Harbor on October 7, 1916, renewed American fear of the submarine menace. After a brief three-hour stay, the submarine left the harbor, cleared neutral waters, and began what *Living Age* called a “career of destruction.”⁴⁷ Because the German commander provided ample warning and time for evacuation of the ships, none of the eight sinkings resulted in loss of life. Nevertheless, the press refused to credit the actions of the commander, explaining that the lack of fatalities resulted from the “promptness and able seamanship shown by the American naval force.”⁴⁸ A correspondent with the New York *Evening Post* stated that submarine operations, so close to American shores, exerted the most visible strain on diplomatic relations between Washington and Berlin. He added that “it is largely a question of luck” and a matter of time before Germany, willingly or accidentally, violates the conditions agreed upon with the United States.⁴⁹

During the U-53 affair, *Literary Digest* published four cartoons from Nashville, New York, and Brooklyn newspapers that epitomized the generally perceived

⁴⁶ Ibid., 831.

⁴⁷ “America and the U53,” *Living Age*, December 9, 1916, 579.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 579-80.

⁴⁹ “Bringing the War to Our Doors,” *Literary Digest*, October 21, 1916, 1015.

characterizations of German submarine warfare.⁵⁰ Cartoonists often drew submarines as some type of canine. The dogs, by and large, fell into two categories: a loyal dachshund, calling on the “sour kraut and wieners” motif, or a ravenous wolf, foaming at the mouth and straining at its leash. Both types of illustrations included a German master, either training the dachshund to do a new trick or holding the leash of monstrous beast. The cartoon from Nashville offered a different perspective that still captured the essence of the canine approach: a recovering alcoholic, dressed as a German, frantically paced outside a bar labeled “Resumption of Submarine Warfare” with a caption that asked the question, “Backsliding?” All of these illustrations reinforced and bolstered the cultural link between the character of Germans and the nature of submarine warfare.

Throughout this period, policy makers in the nation’s capital noted the fluidity of public opinion and discourse about German submarines. In his postwar memoirs, Secretary of State Robert Lansing wrote that the *Lusitania* sinking “sent a wave of horror throughout the country, particularly in the East.”⁵¹ Regional proximity to the U-boat threat certainly affected the degree of public fear, for “as one went westward...the demands for drastic action grew less emphatic.”⁵² Due to the lack of public unanimity, Lansing and other officials in Washington deemed it necessary to avoid the issue of war until Germany forced the divided citizenry to unite through a “slow and irritating period of education and enlightenment,” *vis-à-vis* USW.⁵³ As discussed above, Germany’s

⁵⁰ Ibid., 1016-7.

⁵¹ Robert Lansing, *War Memoirs of Robert Lansing, Secretary of State* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1970), 27.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 28.

pledge to halt USW in late 1915 did not ease the fear of submarines throughout the country, and in a January 1916 memorandum to President Wilson, Lansing acknowledged the continued possibility of war. While the Secretary of State believed Germany's aggression would inevitably threaten American sovereignty, he again stated that "public opinion is not yet ready to accept this point of view. The American people will have to be educated to a true vision of the menace that Germany is to liberty and democracy."⁵⁴ Though Lansing's memoirs never revealed the means by which such an education would occur, every newspaper account of U-boat attacks undoubtedly strengthened the "true vision" of Germany. By early 1917, the secretary seemed to believe that America's "education" neared completion when he concluded another memorandum to President Wilson: "War cannot come too soon to suit me since I know that it must come at last."⁵⁵

Meanwhile, the failure of the submarine to break the British blockade's stranglehold of German shipping, particularly after the surface fleet engagement at the Battle of Jutland in mid-1916, forced the Imperial Navy's leaders to conclude that winning the war rested on the resumption of USW. At the risk of war with America, USW could, reasoned the Kaiser's advisors, force the British out of the war before America entered the fighting. With this gambling logic, Germany announced the renewal of USW on February 1, 1917, and began sinking enemy shipping at an alarming rate – U-boats sank 386,000 tons of shipping in January, escalating to 881,000 tons by April.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Ibid., 103.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 209.

⁵⁶ Michael S. Neiberg, *Fighting the Great War: A Global History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 139.

German necessity and American public opinion raced toward one another like two juggernauts on a collision course.

Germany's submarine salvation immediately became a "Catch 22" when neutral America declared, "Enough," on April 4, 1917. Following the February announcement, the United States severed diplomatic ties with Germany. Though President Wilson still offered hope that war between the two countries would not come, he clearly stated that submarines would decide American action:

If this inveterate confidence on my part in the sobriety and prudent foresight of [German] purpose should unhappily prove unfounded, if American ships and American Lives [sic] should, in fact, be sacrificed by [German] naval commanders in heedless contravention of the just and reasonable understandings of international law and the obvious dictates of humanity, I shall take the liberty of coming again before the Congress to ask that authority be given me to use any means necessary for the protection of our seamen and our people in the prosecution of their peaceful and legitimate errands on the high seas.⁵⁷

Two days later, Wilson made good on his promise and asked that Congress, in response to the continuance of USW, declare war against Germany. Following the congressional declaration, Wilson addressed the American people, calling for unified resolve and effort to end the war quickly, "submarines or no submarines."⁵⁸ While the utterances of Wilson did not create or significantly modify America's cultural discourse of submarine warfare, they most assuredly placed that discourse at the forefront of the country's wartime memory and shaped the cultural response to the vessels in the decades following the First World War.

⁵⁷ Woodrow Wilson, *Why We Are at War: Messages to the Congress, January to April, 1917* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1917), 24-5.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 71-9.

After America officially entered the war, the nation's press began to downplay the threat of German submarines. Wartime propaganda and fewer sinkings – American Admiral William Sims helped implement a convoy system that escorted 88, 000 ships through U-boat-infested waters, losing only 436 – undoubtedly played a large role in this changed discourse, but nonetheless, the relaxed tone of reports from late 1917 and 1918 added a new dimension to existing cultural perceptions.⁵⁹ In August of 1918, *Literary Digest* published a story, mockingly entitled, “The ‘U’-Boats’ Effort to Terrify Us,” in which a New York *Tribune* correspondent chronicled submarine actions off the coast of Cape Cod. While a crowd of observers gathered on sand dunes, an anonymous U-boat “battled” four fishing scows. The *Tribune* reporter gave his personal opinion of what the maneuvers resembled:

A child with a “mad” on is the nearest thing to this U-Boat’s tactics; say, a child locked up in a room for punishment who vents his wrath on the only enemy available by upsetting the chairs and pulling the covers off the crib.⁶⁰

In closing, the reporter assured his readers that, scows aside, “the submarine in the Atlantic has been an utter failure...”⁶¹ This humorous account illustrates the radical shift from the abrasive rhetoric used to describe the *Falaba* sinking to one of the final conceptions of submarine warfare in 1918, making American wartime discourse anything but static.

⁵⁹ Neiberg, *Fighting the Great War*, 288-92.

⁶⁰ “The ‘U’-Boats’ Effort to Terrify Us,” *Literary Digest*, August 3, 1918, 22-3.

⁶¹ Ibid.

At various times throughout the war, members of Congress sought to uncover the reasons for conflicting reports that the submarine threat had subsided. In late January 1918, the House Committee on Naval Affairs pressed Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels to evaluate the progress made by the Allies in checking German submarine attacks. While Daniels did believe that the Allies would win the naval war, his response provided clear reasons for the shifting public perception of submarines.

The loss by the submarines is like a pendulum. At one time the loss was so great, some months ago, that people were panic stricken. Then it fell down so low that everybody became perfectly satisfied the menace was ended; that is, the average man thought so. Then it went up again...It will not do to say that we have overcome it; it will not do to say that the menace does not still exist...⁶²

In addition to newspaper accounts that illustrated the “submarine pendulum,” members of the committee noted that differing reports concerning the existence of a submarine threat helped fuel public confusion whenever congressmen returned from fact-finding missions in England. Because of the dynamic nature of submarine war, Secretary Daniels offered that no “Congressman has been given the correct figures, or anyone else.”⁶³ Submarine warfare, therefore, presented the perfect breeding ground for cultural discourse largely disconnected from reality. Despite this disconnect, the submarine discourse forged between 1914 and 1918 carried over into the peace-time world and began to affect on-the-ground reality as diplomats from across the globe converged on Paris to erect an “eternal peace.”

⁶² House Committee on Naval Affairs, *Estimates Submitted by the Secretary of the Navy, 1918*, 65th Cong., 1st sess., 1918, 467.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 468.

Immediately after the November 1918 armistice, reports began to pour out of Germany that painted the country's population in a sympathetic light. Germans called for leniency at the Paris Peace Conference in wake of the continued British naval blockade that starved the country into submission, but during this time, the American press invoked the memory of the evil Hun vessels. The *Wall Street Journal* reacted to such pleas by declaring that "every German family should be furnished with an appetizing list of food-cargoes sent to the bottom by U-Boats."⁶⁴ Stephane Lauzanne, editor of the *Paris Matin*, warned the American public to be wary of German "sob stuff," noting that "it is ridiculous to speak of the 'good German people' – the same German people who shouted with glee when the *Lusitania* was sunk and little American children drowned."⁶⁵ Lauzanne concluded his warning by insisting that the only good Germans were those who were dead.⁶⁶

Not even reports that the German navy mutinied in the war's final months found sympathy among most Americans. The Philadelphia *Public Ledger* observed that, "The German seamen never mutinied against orders to kill women and children."⁶⁷ The Greenville, South Carolina *Piedmont* colored all German sailors as dishonorable, observing that while "the Hun battleships had a disgraceful ending [at Scapa Flow]...the submarines had a disgraceful beginning."⁶⁸ The revival of fiery wartime rhetoric brought with it a call for justice as President Wilson prepared to meet with fellow diplomats in

⁶⁴ "A Few Peace Pointers," *Literary Digest*, November 30, 1918, 15.

⁶⁵ "Germany Playing the Baby Game," *Literary Digest*, November 30, 1918, 18-9.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁶⁷ "Topics in Brief," *Literary Digest*, November 23, 1918, 16.

⁶⁸ "Topics in Brief," *Literary Digest*, December 14, 1918, 16.

Paris. Newspapers explicitly tied former Kaiser Wilhelm II and perpetrators of USW together as nothing more than common criminals. The Baltimore *Sun* insisted that “whatever is done with William [sic], there are other supercriminals who must not escape if justice is to be done: the instigators and perpetrators of U-Boat infamies...It would be unpardonable if any of these should be allowed to escape swift and terrible punishment.”⁶⁹ With such a sweeping mandate for reciprocity, the delegates in Paris began to draft terms of peace that cited USW as justification for burdening Germany with the payment of massive war reparations.

Following the completion of the Treaty of Versailles, Americans rejoiced in what the publishers of *Women’s Weekly* called *Freedom’s Triumph*.⁷⁰ In the volume, *Freedom’s Triumph*, the authors wrote about the inhumane nature of German warfare. Submarines featured prominently alongside pictures of poison gas attacks and flamethrowers as “diabolical method[s] of warfare originated by the Germans.”⁷¹ An article entitled, “The Honor of the Seas,” addressed the “ruthless” use of USW, again calling on the memory of the *Lusitania*.⁷² According to the article, “Never, until the present war, did a nation that pretended to being [sic] civilized, allow women and children to become the prey of warcraft.”⁷³ Similarly, a later article about the scuttling of the German fleet at Scapa Flow left no doubt as to the nature of “the Hun code of

⁶⁹ “Wilhelm to the Bar of Justice,” *Literary Digest*, November 30, 1918, 12-13.

⁷⁰ *Freedom’s Triumph: The Why, When, and Where of the European Conflict* (Chicago: The Magazine Circulation Company, Inc, 1919).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 63-72.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 63.

honor.”⁷⁴ The author of the article called the scuttling incident an “act of wanton destruction and criminal wastefulness” that attempted to avoid the consequences of “[Germany’s] foolishness and final defeat.”⁷⁵ So strong was the desire to condemn German actions that the article’s author suggested the killing of unarmed German sailors by the British navy “in wild and righteous indignation.”⁷⁶ Clearly, the cultural conception of the Despised weapon of the Hun reached its zenith during and immediately after the Paris Peace Conference.

With Germany put in its proper place, most Americans turned their attention to domestic issues even as the country’s leaders convened the world’s largest disarmament conference in late 1921. When national interest did focus on the Washington Conference, however, public opinion revealed a lack of the unanimity that had helped guide the diplomats in Paris two years earlier. In newspapers across the country, editors railed that the conference was either too great or too limited in its scope: an excessive disarmament agreement would weaken the nation’s ability to defend itself, but too light of an agreement would fail to check the potential aggression of foreign powers. William Randolph Hearst’s New York-based *American* called the conference an attack against U.S. sovereignty, while the Springfield, Massachusetts *Republican* noted that, for the event’s organizers, “it has not been deemed practicable to include aircraft in the scaling-down process.”⁷⁷ Similarly, the New York *Times* asked its readers, “Of what avail would it be to reduce and regulate dreadnought construction if nothing were done to set a limit

⁷⁴ Ibid., 90.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ “Will the Destruction of Warships Destroy War?” *Literary Digest*, November 26, 1921, 7-10.

to the expansion of new instruments of war?”⁷⁸ Many editors, such as those at the Canadian Kingston *Whig* and the Colorado Springs *Gazette*, channeled their fiscally-minded audience when reporting on the conference proceedings. The *Whig* suggested that “an excellent figurehead for battleships would be a formal design of a weeping taxpayer,” and the *Gazette* asserted that, “if placed end to end, the national debts would conclude that war is unprofitable.”⁷⁹ Other papers, including the Lincoln *Star*, viewed the financial benefit of scrapping naval construction with skepticism: “You see, by reducing navies we can save money enough to build far-cruising and heavily-armored aircraft.”⁸⁰

Public faith in the hope promised by the Washington Conference waned as the world leaders assembled appeared as divided as the host nation. British representative Arthur Balfour called the proposed limitation on submarine tonnage too liberal given the events of the world war.⁸¹ As a nation of limited naval strength, France opposed Great Britain’s attempts to severely limit – or abolish outright – the use of submarines. The New York *Times* ran the response of Stephane Lauzanne to Balfour in which the French newspaper editor called submarines the “arm of the poor,” noting that, “in these times of expensive living, it is the only arm which is still cheap.”⁸² While the Lansing *Capital News* jokingly remarked that “nations could safely lose their arms if statesmen wouldn’t

⁷⁸ “A Grim Disarmament Argument,” *Literary Digest*, November 26, 1921, 7-10.

⁷⁹ “Topics in Brief,” *Literary Digest*, November 26, 1921, 17.

⁸⁰ “Topics in Brief,” *Literary Digest*, December 10, 1921, 13.

⁸¹ “Will the Destruction” *Literary Digest*, 8.

⁸² “Mr. Balfour’s ‘Submarine Attack’” *Literary Digest*, December 3, 1921, 16-7.

lose their heads,”⁸³ the New York *Call* feared that the conference would bring “the same disillusionment that followed the ‘war to end war.’”⁸⁴ Reporting on the diplomatic squabbling, the Norfolk *Virginia Pilot* surmised that “while agreement at the Washington Conference is not to be expected before snow flies, it is to be hoped for before fur flies.”⁸⁵

As diplomats argued over the size of future navies, the American public continued to debate the issue of submarine warfare. Many papers constantly voiced concerns that the conference would leave several stones unturned when it came to regulating new weapons of war, particularly the submarine. The St. Louis *Star* proclaimed that “America’s influence at the conference should be thrown against the weapons that are directed at non-combatants – the submarine and poison gas.”⁸⁶ Other Americans believed that the aim of the conference should mirror that of 1919 Paris and make future wars impossible. As noted by *Literary Digest*, dozens of papers, including the Louisville *Courier-Journal*, the Des Moines *Register*, and the Baltimore *Sun*, agreed that “it is useless to forbid inventions; the only way to prevent the use of aerial bombs, submarines, and poison gas in war is to prevent war.”⁸⁷ From a more pragmatic perspective the New York *Globe* reminded its readers that “war is slaughter, and can never be anything else, and victory will always go to the contestant who is best at killing.”⁸⁸ In the end, the

⁸³ “Topics in Brief,” December 10, 1921, 13.

⁸⁴ “Will the Destruction” *Literary Digest*, 8.

⁸⁵ “Topics in Brief,” December 10, 1921, 13.

⁸⁶ “‘Viper’ Weapons,” *Literary Digest*, December 24, 1921, 8-9.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

conference proved to some observers that “the pen is mightier than the battleship,”⁸⁹ but not the submarine. Battleships commanders had committed no crimes, whereas submarines had, and yet the conference treated the two as deserving of equal consideration. The Washington Treaty merely dictated that the signatories limit the number of submarines in their respective navies and use the vessels honorably during times of war – an easy promise to make in peacetime. As the Steubenville, Ohio *Herald-Star* observed, “Germany is privileged to snicker a bit when she hears that battleships are wicked while subs are essential.”⁹⁰ The grand disarmament conference had done nothing to eliminate the weapons that struck fear into heart of America between 1914 and 1918.

While the Washington Conference failed to definitively settle the “submarine question” despite strong postwar anti-German sentiment, the 1920s saw a shift in cultural discourse that further hindered subsequent attempts to control the Hun weapon. In 1927, famed writer Lowell Thomas published *Count Luckner, The Sea Devil*, a volume that went far in dismantling America’s negative perception of Germans.⁹¹ Thomas’ book – in actuality, the count’s autobiography – told the story of a first-class sailor whose intentions were honorable and whose actions were admirable. As the captain of a commerce raider during the Great War, Luckner snuck past the British blockade and commenced a campaign of principled destruction. The count “had the unique and enviable reputation of disrupting Allied shipping without ever having taken a human life

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ “Topics in Brief,” December 10, 1921, 13.

⁹⁰ “Topics in Brief,” *Literary Digest*, January 28, 1922, 16.

⁹¹ Lowell Thomas, *Count Luckner, The Sea Devil* (Garden City, NY: Garden City Publishing Company, Inc., 1927).

or so much as drowning a ship's cat."⁹² Likening Luckner to the famed "Lawrence of Arabia," Thomas asserted that the captain and his crew were "romantic people traveling in the most romantic way known to the sea" – in a wooden sail ship.⁹³ Although many years of serving before the mast had rendered him "unable to express himself without using sulphury profanities," daring tenacity and strong self-discipline allowed Luckner to replace the "blazing nautical oaths" with the English expression, "By Joe!"⁹⁴ Undoubtedly, Thomas's faithful readers – of whom he had many – read such turns of phrase and thought, "If there is one such man in Germany, perhaps there are more."

The cultural importance of Luckner's story becomes clearer when placed in the context of 1920s international politics, particularly in terms of German war guilt. In late 1918, the German government appointed Legation Secretary Bernhard W. von Bülow to head a special bureau of inquiry with the expressed purpose of proving the country's innocence to the delegates at Versailles.⁹⁵ The hurried efforts of the bureau created the "professors' memorandum" of May 27, 1919. Signed by four members of the Heidelberg Association for a Policy of Justice,⁹⁶ the document concluded that Germany had conducted a "defensive war against tsarism" in 1914.⁹⁷ After the failure to temper Allied resolve, Bülow's bureau became the War Guilt Section of the Foreign Ministry, charged

⁹² Ibid., 4.

⁹³ Ibid., 7.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 6-7.

⁹⁵ Holger H. Herwig, "Clio Deceived: Patriotic Self-Censorship in Germany after the Great War," *International Security* 12, no. 2 (1987):10-13.

⁹⁶ Though the signatories included Hans Delbrück, Max von Montgelas, Albrecht Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, and Max Weber, historians agree that someone in Bülow's bureau, probably Bülow himself, wrote the "independent scholarly" document.

⁹⁷ Quoted in Herwig, "Clio Deceived," 12.

with the long-term historical revision of the war's causes. After hiring three respected academics to serve as editors, the War Guilt Section published forty volumes of government records between 1922 and 1927 from the Foreign Ministry office that "proved" German innocence in aggressively waging war during 1914.⁹⁸ Despite the academic veneer, Bülow retained sole discretionary power in determining which documents to include in *Die Grosse Politik*, ultimately creating a type of "scholarly" propaganda.⁹⁹ Nonetheless, Bülow's project helped pave the way for other revisionists scholars of the 1920s.

While Bülow's War Guilt Section labored, post-war Germany rapidly declined in the midst of political, social, and economic turmoil. The new Weimar government proved unable to deal with rebellious factions of the political left and right. Because the Treaty of Versailles limited the size of the nation's army, particularly the officer corps, Germans lost an important pillar of their national identity rooted in long-standing Prussian militarism.¹⁰⁰ Most devastating of all, the wartime food shortage mixed with economic disaster in the form of hyper-inflation, crippling the defeated nation. Germany's supposed innocence, coupled with the country's internal deterioration, caused people throughout the Western world, including America, to conclude that the treaty was far too punitive. As a result, international sympathy for Germany grew throughout the

⁹⁸ Johannes Lepsius, Albrecht Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, and Friedrich Thimme, eds., *Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette, 1871-1914: Sammlung der Diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes* (Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte, 1922-1927), 40 vols.

⁹⁹ Herwig, "Clio Deceived," 14-15.

¹⁰⁰ While the treaty also restricted Germany from having any submarines, it did not attack the foundations of the country's martial culture as did limitations imposed on its standing army.

decade, creating room for revisionist interpretations of the war's causes and consequences.

Inspired by the evidence presented in *Die Grosse Politik* and bent on removing the stigma of war guilt from their country, nationalistic authors of German reactionary literature during the 1920s questioned the role of France in the years leading up to 1914.¹⁰¹ In theory, proving German innocence and French guilt in terms of causing the First World War would remove Germany's post-war obligations to France, particularly the payment of massive reparations.¹⁰² During this time, the belief in the French desire for *revanche* helped frame much of the scholarship. According to this approach, the 1871 loss of Alsace and Lorraine to Germany following the Franco-Prussian War compelled French leaders during the next forty years to construct their country's foreign policy around the idea of *revanche*. The theory became reality when the Treaty of Versailles stripped Germany of the two territories and restored them to France. Historians bolstered their argument with the fact that France's president in 1914, Raymond Poincaré, grew up in Lorraine and experienced the German take-over of the region as a young boy. British and American revisionism, inspired by Versailles diplomat John Maynard Keynes, grew in popularity throughout the decade.¹⁰³ Historians such as Harry Elmer Barnes and Robert L. Owen argued that a Franco-Russian alliance, seeking the territorial acquisitions of Alsace-Lorraine and the Dardanelles, conspired to engineer a Balkan conflict.¹⁰⁴ Even

¹⁰¹ John F.V. Keiger, *France and the Origins of the First World War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 1-2.

¹⁰² For further development of this idea, see H.W. Koch, ed., *The Origins of the First World War: Great Power Rivalry and German War Aims* (London: Macmillan, 1972), 3-6.

¹⁰³ Laurence Lafore, *The Long Fuse: An Interpretation of the Origins of World War I*, 2nd ed. (New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1971), 20.

in France, leftist historians charged their country and Poincaré with warmongering until the 1929 publication of the country's diplomatic documents.¹⁰⁵ Taken as a whole, Thomas's *Sea Devil* and the easing of anti-German tensions throughout America dealt a crippling blow to the dominant cultural perception that submarines were evil.¹⁰⁶

When world leaders met at the 1930 London Naval Conference to discuss the issue of abolishing submarines, the absence of a strong German navy exposed the opposing world views associated with the vessels. The representatives from the United States and Great Britain urged their fellow diplomats to consider the total abolition of submarines "in the belief that [they] cannot be controlled during wartime."¹⁰⁷ In contrast, France and Japan – both of whom had smaller, weaker navies – insisted that the weapons were essential for coastal defense. At the conclusion of the conference the *Philadelphia Record* recorded the diplomatic stalemate as follows: "After being solemnly brought to trial on charges of murder, the submarine has been released on parole and under obligations of good behavior."¹⁰⁸ As with the Washington Conference, London's attempt to rid the world of submarines ended the same as it began – with hope that civilized nations would fight civilly. Viewing the London treaty as nothing more than a farce, the *Washington Post* accused the country's delegation of "utterly misrepresenting American

¹⁰⁴ Harry Elmer Barnes, *The Genesis of the World War: An Introduction to the Problem of War Guilt* (New York: Kessinger Publishing, 1926), and Robert L. Owen, *The Russian Imperial Conspiracy, 1891-1914* (New York: Owen, 1923).

¹⁰⁵ Eugenia C. Kiesling, "France," in *The Origins of World War I*, ed. Richard F. Hamilton and Holger H. Herwig (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 228.

¹⁰⁶ The attention of America's post-war "war guilt" curiosity had, by this time, turned toward domestic culprits, namely bankers. For further development of this argument, see Kathryn S. Olmstead, *Real Enemies: Conspiracy Theories and American Democracy, World War I to 9/11*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹⁰⁷ "To Rob the 'Sea Viper' of its Venom," *Literary Digest*, February 22, 1930, 9-10.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

Policy” in advocating the abolition of submarines. In fact, the *Post* noted, “the security of the Panama Canal depends largely upon the skilful use of *defensive* [italics mine] submarines.”¹⁰⁹

The *Post*’s observation of U.S. submarine policy proved more accurate than perhaps the correspondent realized. Since 1897, the United States had planned for a potential war with Japan, the strategy for which composed “War Plan Orange.” As technologies evolved, naval strategists had to account for the use of new weapons such as submarines. In the aftermath of the First World War, U.S. policy makers had to walk a fine line when it came to using the vessels as commerce raiders. As noted by Edward Miller, the submarine dilemma was two fold in the 1930s: (a) Despite an ease in international tensions, the American public still attributed German USW with the country’s entrance into the war following the “indiscriminate sinkings” of unarmed merchant vessels, and (b) owing to the physical impracticality of searching possible belligerent ships, “submarines could not honor the gentlemanly code of the Hague Convention” and other such treaties.¹¹⁰ Despite the protests of submariners, plan “Orange” continued to adhere to international treaties that tied the hands of the Navy.

With the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the cultural perception of the submarine as the Despised Weapon of the Hun officially met its end, having been in a veritable iron lung since 1930. Because the aerial bombardment of the naval base had neglected to destroy the submarine fleet, submarines immediately became the first line of

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 10.

¹¹⁰ Miller, *War Plan Orange*, 152.

attack.¹¹¹ However, due to the lack of initiative shown by the prudent submarine commanders, the United States strategy of USW failed for several months into 1942. It was only when skippers began exhibiting uninhibited zeal that the vessels started gaining ground against the Japanese navy and merchant fleet. As such, the “changing of the guard” that occurred onboard submarines marked the cultural death of the Despised Weapon of the Hun. In its place came another cultural identity that had lain in wait since the 1920s – one that was as Silent as the Grave. It is to that strain of discourse and reality that this study’s second chapter will attend.

¹¹¹ Submarines stationed in the Philippines initiated war patrols just hours after the surprise attack on December 7th, 1941.

CHAPTER III

SILENT AS THE GRAVE

The formal graduation exercise which used to be held before the war started has been replaced by an informal gathering such as this morning's assembly. This lack of fanfare is consistent with the submarine way of life. However[,] this lack of ceremony does not lessen the importance of your stepping into a new field of usefulness to the submarine service...I caution you not to be optimistic or to take away an idea the submarine work out on patrol is 'Peaches and Cream.' It is the submarine's job to carry on a campaign of steady attrition. ~Remarks to Submarine Officer Class #74, December 1943¹¹²

The graduation speech from 1943 reveals the uncertainty that plagued American submariners for decades. First and foremost, the speaker in question correctly described the nature of contemporary discourse surrounding American submarine warfare. The branch of the United States Navy known as the "Silent Service" was one enshrouded in a mystery that posed more questions than it answered. The American public's quiet acquiescence that submarines *were*, in fact, a permanent fixture of the country's military was a relatively minor footnote in the submarine's story. Throughout the interwar period, the submarine debate continuously returned to the same nagging point of inquiry: what role will these vessels have in a modern navy? The graduation speaker indicates that, at least by 1943, the necessities of war had answered that question and forced submariners to become arbiters of attrition. Yet, the reference to the perception of submarine work as "Peaches and Cream" also reveals an awareness that not all wartime patrols concentrated

¹¹² "Graduation Lecture, September-December Class, 1943," December 1943, Naval Submarine School Records & Archives [Hereafter cited as SUBSCOL], Box SOBC #79-99, File SOBC Class #74 Sep-Dec 1943, Submarine Force Museum Archives, Groton, Connecticut [Hereafter cited as Submarine Force, Ct]. Though the document provides no conclusive evidence as to who spoke at the ceremony, the name "Cdr Bacon" appears in handwritten form on the first page. More than likely, "Cdr Bacon" refers to Barton E. Bacon, Jr. – a veteran of the initial submarine operations in the Pacific, 1942 – who later served as Officer-in-Charge of the Submarine School (January – October 1944).

on commerce raiding or engagements with enemy warships. Indeed, war patrols largely consisted of monotonous routine, interspersed with occasional excitement. Historian Stephanie Cousineau has called the American submarine war against Japan “a search for identity” because submariners “wore many hats, as fleet supporters, mine-layers, life-guarders, warship killers and, not least, as wagers of unrestricted submarine warfare.”¹¹³

Despite Cousineau’s accurate assertion that US submarines lacked a clear identity, she, like other naval historians, has failed to explore fully the roots of wartime events and public perception. By focusing solely on the military perspective, she and other historians have presented readers with an incomplete picture. Most treatments of interwar naval policy regarding submarines have correctly noted that popular memory of German “atrocities” during the First World War played a role in deciding strategy for future wars, yet generally gloss over the nature of that memory with a single, generic sentence.

The lack of a unified cultural perception regarding the use of American submarines created an environment that fostered the growth of competing submarine strategies. Craig Felker has noted that during the interwar period “naval officers struggled to shape a technological anomaly to exist within a tightly bounded [Mahanian] strategic framework.”¹¹⁴ The discourse about the “Despised Weapon of the Hun” similarly forced strategists to work within a *cultural* framework wary of offensive submarine operations, at least with regard to commerce raiding. As sneaky conceptions

¹¹³ Stephanie Cousineau, “Ruthless War: A Comparative Analysis of German and American “Unrestricted” Submarine Warfare in the Second World War,” (PhD diss., University of Calgary, 2007), 351.

¹¹⁴ Felker, *Testing American Sea Power*, 62. Mahanian doctrine refers to the school of strategic naval thought birthed by Alfred Thayer Mahan who advocated large, decisive sea battles, the purpose of which was to force an outcome in any given war.

of the vessels weakened, the aggressive plans for US submarines gained momentum. However, the submarine's lack of cultural identity hampered the creation of a definitive strategic purpose that spilled over into the practical execution of the Pacific War, especially during the early months of 1942. The wanting for a culturally accepted *guerre de course* likewise gave birth to the perception that submarines were, by nature, highly secretive. During the Second World War, Hollywood co-opted and bolstered the notion of the "Silent Service," lending credence to a limited submarine discourse in the interest of "national security." What follows is an examination of how the interwar US Navy reacted to both a well-defined discourse about German submarines and a more loosely constructed, uncertain discourse surrounding American submarine warfare. Ultimately, ambiguous policies about the weapons established a new discourse that was Silent as the Grave.

When world leaders met at the Washington Naval Conference in late 1921 and early 1922, the use of submarines by the Hun dominated debates of the vessels' abolition. At the end of December 1921, *Literary Digest* ran an article that easily faded into the static generated by the conference. "Lost Submarines that Saved Themselves," told the harrowing, noncombatant tales of two US submarines that suffered from accidental sinkings.¹¹⁵ *Literary Digest* noted that both crew's actions were examples of "heroic manhood, expert skill, supreme self-sacrifice and lightning intelligence" that "add[ed] another incident to the heroic annals of the sea, to which the submarine has contributed more than its share."¹¹⁶ The *S-48* experienced an uncontrollable dive in late 1921 while

¹¹⁵ "Lost Submarines that Saved Themselves," *Literary Digest*, December 31, 1921, 32-6.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

cruising through Long Island Sound *en route* to New London, Ct. After hours of back-breaking work, the crew managed to create enough buoyancy in the bow to raise that portion of the ship out of the water. In the case of the *AL-4*, however, human error played an equal role in creating the problem as human perseverance did in solving it. When a “green” sailor turned the wrong valve, the submarine began taking on unnecessary ballast and plunged nose-first into the mud, 294 feet below the surface of Bantry Bay, Ireland in 1918. The *Digest* writers told their readers that both stories were important because “the work of our submarines during the war escaped without more than the briefest mention.”¹¹⁷ Considering that the defensively-deployed US submarines did not sink any ships during the war,¹¹⁸ it is unlikely that the 1921 article added much luster to the reputations of US submariners.

The perception of US submarines as a relatively weak arm of the navy appeared throughout the decade that witnessed the First World War. In 1910, a General Board planning aide directed that, in the event of war with Japan, twenty long-range (150 miles) submarines could deploy as defensive forces to guard the waters outside the naval base at Subic in the Philippines.¹¹⁹ Such a force, continued the aide, could render the entire base “well nigh impenetrable.”¹²⁰ Three years later, theorists endorsed use of an on-shore fortress, coupled with a thick net of off-shore minefields and submarines, for the protection of Guam.¹²¹ War plans in 1917 allocated “a few troops and submarines to

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 34.

¹¹⁸ Felker, *Testing American Sea Power*, 29.

¹¹⁹ Miller, *War Plan Orange*, 68.

¹²⁰ Quoted in Ibid.

police” the “unimportant and unendangered [sic]” area around Alaska.¹²² By the 1920s, however, planners dropped the entire area from the strategic War Plan Orange.¹²³ On the surface, these examples appear progressive in that such an unpopular weapon featured prominently in the defense of – with the exception of Alaska – important South Pacific naval bases. In truth, relegating an entire class of ships to defensive tasks in a navy built on the principles of ruthless offensive tactics equated to being a poor, beat cop in Prohibition Chicago.

There were the occasional naval officers, though, who called for the expansion of the submarine’s role. Notably, Lieutenant Chester Nimitz wrote, in 1912, an article for the US Naval Institute’s *Proceedings* that touted submarines of the “near future” as dangerous offensive weapons.¹²⁴ Specifically, Nimitz declared that “the gradual improvement in the size, motive power, and speed of the submarine...will have a large part in deciding fleet action.”¹²⁵ Immediately after the war, Captain Thomas Hart, head of Submarine Section, similarly pointed out to his superiors that “the submarine will be an extremely valuable weapon for...operations against Japanese commerce,” citing as a precedent the German use of USW in the preceding years.¹²⁶ While the words of Nimitz and Hart spoke for a minority within the navy community – both were submariners – they

¹²¹ Ibid., 71.

¹²² Ibid., 41.

¹²³ Ibid., 42.

¹²⁴ Quoted in Talbott, “Weapons Development,” 57.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Quoted in Ibid., 56.

nonetheless indicate the beginnings of a multi-faceted discourse about the use of US submarines.

The debate between offensive and defensive submarine theorists proved largely academic – no vessel in existence could meet the needs of large-scale fleet operations – until technological necessity reared its head. Although the Washington Conference failed to abolish submarines outright, it did limit the tonnage a given navy could devote to the vessels. More importantly for American war planners, the conference imposed limitations on the development of military bases, creating a need for new submarine development. Article XIX of the treaty halted US military development of mandates/possessions west of the 180th meridian.¹²⁷ The treaty therefore left the US with only one major fortified naval base in the Pacific – Pearl Harbor. At 4850 miles from Manila and 3400 miles from Tokyo Bay, the location of this last outpost meant interwar period planners could no longer entertain ideas of creating permanent submarine bases in the South Pacific and reinforced the need for a long-range submarine.¹²⁸

As submarine development progressed to meet demands during the 1920s, the US Navy struggled to define the role of the vessels in any future war. Shortly after the Washington Conference, the navy assigned Admiral Edwin Anderson, a veteran of the U-Boat war, to Manila in order to create his own plans for the area. Because development of an adequate long-range submarine was still a decade away from completion, Anderson clung to the defensive school of thought and reported back that a rapidly deployed

¹²⁷ Miller, *War Plan Orange*, 75.

¹²⁸ Talbott, “Weapons Development,” 60.

submarine flotilla could *hold* Luzon in the event of war with Japan.¹²⁹ Nearly six years later, drafts of War Plan Orange called for the deployment of fifty-one submarines from Pearl Harbor to the South Pacific during the first year of the war; however, such drafts also halted submarine sorties after the second month.¹³⁰ Submarines, in this perspective, would be vital to initial operations in the Pacific, but their importance would lessen as the war progressed.

As with the lack of cultural perception and clearly-defined strategy, the ambiguity of American submarine warfare filtered down to the country's training facilities at New London, Ct. The experiences of Ensign McFarland W. Wood demonstrate this phenomenon well. Wood entered the submarine officer training program in January 1926 and kept a record of his time in New London.¹³¹ Although the school's workload often interfered with his ability to make daily entries, the young officer nonetheless revealed, through his journal, the strengths and weaknesses of the Connecticut-based "SUBSCOL." When time permitted, Wood described the on- and off-base excursions of himself and his classmates, lending his voice to a generation of interwar submariners uncertain of their place within a modern navy.

Upon his arrival at the SUBSCOL, Wood immediately noted that the intellectual rigors of the school rivaled those of civilian universities. Instructors impressed upon their students from day one that the base at New London was "a taut school, and we are going

¹²⁹ Miller, *War Plan Orange*, 57.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 146. The initial wave of thirty submarines would deploy in the first month, followed by an additional sixteen the next month.

¹³¹ "Submarine School Diary," Ensign McFarland W. Wood, 1926, SUBSCOL PA: 01, Personal Accounts: Diaries, Letters, Reminiscences, etc., Submarine Force, Ct.

to have to work like the dickens” to succeed.¹³² After a brief inspection of the S-3 and S-49, the school’s two practice submarines, Wood concluded that “running a sub is harder than I imagined, for it has to be balanced when under water to keep it from nosing to the bottom.”¹³³ Such a statement implies that the contemporary American public would likewise be unaware of and have little appreciation for even the most basic technical intricacies of the vessels. Wood himself was a graduate of the Naval Academy at Annapolis, MD – placing him within a small percentage of collegiate-trained Americans – yet he had given inadequate thought to the complex nature of submarines. Like the larger discourse about American submarines, Wood’s own preconception was loosely constructed and far from definitive. By the end of his first week, the ensign wearily acknowledged that “they have issued us more books to study here, then [sic] an ordinary person gets thru [sic] at college.”¹³⁴ The Electrical and Communication Departments employed the most pedantic instructors on base as they “vied with each other to see which could issue the most books. We’ve drawn about fifty texts – they figure we are blotters, evidently, as there are more to come, we are told.”¹³⁵ The heavy course load at the SUBSCOL effectively turned officers and enlisted personnel into uniformed co-eds.

Despite providing a strong grounding in the theory of submarine warfare, the interwar SUBSCOL continuously suffered from depressed budgets that hampered hands-on training. According to a 1945 report, between 1916 and 1939, the school used equipment and training aids salvaged from decommissioned submarines. Throughout the

¹³² Ibid., January 4, 1926.

¹³³ Ibid., January 5, 1926.

¹³⁴ Ibid., January 8, 1926.

¹³⁵ Ibid., January 12, 1926.

period, “many difficulties were encountered in obtaining material for practical instruction.”¹³⁶ Wood and his classmates experienced such “difficulties” firsthand. Of the school’s two practice submarines, only one, the S-49, was operational at the time. During his first week of instruction, the aspiring submariner wrote “Subs again in the afternoon, we drew the S-3 today, with her engines all torn down. Consequently the other two sections went out and had a dive where we didn’t.”¹³⁷ At other times, the school’s antiquated equipment became a source of physical danger, rather than just a point of mere annoyance. April entries in Wood’s diary note the following:

Tuesday, 20;

Fire alarm this morning at eight proved to be an explosion of the battery, (forward half) of the S-49. Twelve men injured badly, four of whom died later from shock and infection of mutilated feet and legs. The usual board of inquiry will be appointed, and try to determine the reason for the hydrogen collecting in the battery in explosive concentration.

Wednesday, 21;

Took a look over the smoldering ruins of the battery room of the S-49, just opened up, after smothering the fire. The tops of the battery cells are all blown to kingdom come, but the plates are not hurt. It will mean new jars, covers and connections, not such a terrible loss in dollars and cents as was anticipated. Got quite a thrill when they were removing the cell connections as they arced heavily. Glad there was no more hydrogen present at the time, or there would have been more fireworks than that. About that time someone discovered that the can of torpedo detonators was still hanging on the bulkhead with one end off, supported by two little pieces of wire. A chief put a board down to walk on, and got them out safely, giving them the deep six

¹³⁶ “History of Submarine School,” Officer-in-Charge, Submarine School to Submarine Base Secretary, 11 July 1945, SUBSCOL DOC:01, Documents and Publications: Alphabetical Topics, A-R, File: History – 1916-1945, Submarine Force, Ct.

¹³⁷ “Submarine School Diary,” Wood, January 7, 1926.

at the end of the pier, which appeared to me to be the wrong thing to do.¹³⁸

Budget problems that interfered with training at New London certainly complicated the self-image of submariners. On one hand, submarines were important enough to merit exorbitant intellectual preparation, but on the other hand, fiscal realities necessitated that students train on hand-me-down equipment that was inconvenient at best, and deadly at worst.

Using the well-defined discourse about another, newer branch of the military proved to be a somewhat useful, albeit frustrating, way to describe the nature of US submarine warfare. Both submarines and airplanes came of age during the First World War, but discourse surrounding the two technologies differed greatly. Contemporary Americans juxtaposed the sneaky methods of the former with the lofty, idyllic conception of the latter. Submariners, like Wood, looked to air aces for the appropriate language with which to describe their own military experience. After a brief, initial physical examination upon his entry to the SUBSCOL, Wood wrote that “the real test is later, much on the order of the aviation physical.”¹³⁹ Likening the two fields to one another was not far-fetched; after all, they did share several similarities – the need for killer instincts, the often dangerous missions, and the magic of exploring new worlds beyond the scope of their contemporaries’ imagination. Yet, according to Wood, submariners worked twice as hard as aviators and received only half the recognition:

There is something very fascinating about the whales. But I hate to think of having to wait at least a year to win one of the gold fish devices worn on the coat like aviator’s wings.

¹³⁸ Ibid., April 20-21, 1926.

¹³⁹ Ibid., January 4, 1926.

Denotes “qualified to command” – where the flyers get theirs when they are thru [sic] with their six months school, we are not even eligible until six months after we graduate.¹⁴⁰

Linking submarines and airplanes persisted throughout the interwar period and into the Pacific War. At least within the military community, a discourse developed that reinforced Wood’s observations. A 1942 poem by Richard Voge entitled, “Old Fuds, Young Studs and Lieutenant Commanders,” highlighted the fact that despite having similar missions, aviators and submariners enjoyed divergent reputations.¹⁴¹ The last lines of Voge’s poem conclude that

Where’er you send the subs or planes,
You’re bound to chalk up lots of gains –
And losses, too, but what the hell,
Who cares about their personnel?
For planes are chauffeured by young studs,
Lieutenant Commanders run the subs.¹⁴²

Both Wood and Voge used dominant perceptions about pilots to describe what submariners were not – sexy young aces who did little, yet received high acclaim. However, in detailing what submariners were not, both men failed to clearly discern what submariners actually were.

Not entirely devoted to life beneath the waves, Wood spent his spare time at New London moonlighting as a photographer. To an extent, his hobby allowed him to augment his navy pay. After receiving a royalty check from “P. and A.” for eight dollars and fifty cents, Wood remarked, “Not bad. Wish I had some more to stick in and collect

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., January 8, 1926.

¹⁴¹ Quoted in Roscoe, *United States Submarine Operations...*, xv.

¹⁴² Quoted in Ibid.

on.”¹⁴³ Money alone, however, was not the ensign’s sole reason for continuing his photographic aspirations at SUBSCOL: capturing life with his camera allowed Wood to exercise his artistic muscles. A brief study break in January turned into a full-blown session of sorting negatives and planning future projects. “My next album will not be in brown, but black, with the pictures done in a fine carbon print. Lends more atmosphere, and sophistication [than] the way I have designed the present book.”¹⁴⁴ Classroom discussions about the pomp and circumstance of his June graduation set Wood daydreaming about the summer Yale-Harvard river races and how he “ought to get some good pictures of them.”¹⁴⁵ Even during training, Wood found time to take pictures. Bringing his camera along on a torpedo run in April 1926, Wood obtained permission to take the group’s torpedo retriever, a medium-sized boat used for capturing practice ordnance, away from the practice submarine in hopes of snapping a few shots of the vessel. Heavy seas, however, made him reconsider the practicalities of such future endeavors. “Next time I’m going to tie my camera on to me to negotiate a transfer like that, and not trust to luck, as I got two thrills when passing it across the open sea.”¹⁴⁶ Wood also enjoyed showing off his collection to friends, as well as photographing children at play in the navy community.¹⁴⁷ Photography certainly afforded the officer a distraction from his studies, but it likewise added depth to his self-perception.

¹⁴³ “Submarine School Diary,” Wood, January 5, 1926. Wood never clearly identifies the group/publication he refers to as “P. and A.”

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., January 6, 1926.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., January 8, 1926.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., April 14, 1926.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., April 25 and May 23, 1926.

Following the London Naval Treaty of 1930, war planners and naval strategists slowly found their stride and continually tried, with varying success, to fit submarines into the pre-existing Mahanian doctrine of offensive war. The lack of adequate surface speed, however, prevented submarine flotillas from sailing alongside the main fleet. As a compromise, the navy began using the vessels as independent platforms, deployed to defend a given area of water. Attacking from a defensive position allowed submariners to prove to their colleagues that they too could threaten enemy surface fleets.¹⁴⁸ Slowly, American submarine commanders became more offensively minded, so much so that the navy issued a 1934 memorandum that restated the United States' intentions to adhere to the rules set forth by the London treaty.¹⁴⁹ Specifically, Article 22 of the treaty "rendered a shark a sitting duck" by forcing submarines to follow the same rules of commerce warfare as surface vessels – approaching on the surface, giving warning to the vessel, allowing the merchant sailors to evacuate, and then sinking the ship.¹⁵⁰ However, discussions amongst officers regarding USW had begun to grow serious by the mid-1930s. Testifying before the Senate Committee on Naval Affairs in 1934, Admiral George Day warned that "we must be prepared to discover that in war necessity acknowledges no law."¹⁵¹ Less than a year later, Lieutenant Hyman Rickover believed that "it is almost certain that the submarine practices of the World War will be repeated in a future war."¹⁵² Between 1937 and 1938, Admiral Harry Yarnell, Commander-in-Chief

¹⁴⁸ Felker, *Testing American Sea Power*, 68-72.

¹⁴⁹ Talbott, "Weapons Development," 61.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁵¹ Quoted in Felker, *Testing American Seapower*, 74.

Asiatic Fleet (CINCAF), continuously advocated a submarine war of “strangulation,” against the Japanese.¹⁵³ International law and naval reality were fighting to a stalemate.

As war approached, the need for additional submarine training became increasingly important to naval authorities. On October 26, 1940, Admiral Harold Stark, Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), sent a confidential letter that “requested the BuNav [Bureau of Navigation] to incorporate into the curriculum of the Submarine School a short advanced course for P.C.O.’s [Potential Commanding Officers] in attack technique.”¹⁵⁴ Neither Stark nor the BUNAV clearly defined to what end (i.e. “traditional” versus “unrestricted” warfare) students of the course would use their new training. The BUNAV’s reply, dated January 6, 1941, authorized the creation of a month-long course that would “increase knowledge of approach and attack methods by study and discussions, and technique [gleaned from] actual practice by experienced submarine officers who are slated to become commanding” or senior officers aboard submarines.¹⁵⁵ Regardless of the specific course curriculum, the development of course itself was indeed timely. By mid-April 1941, the first P.C.O. class, consisting of four officers, had graduated.¹⁵⁶ Interestingly enough, the next month Stark approved the war plan titled “Rainbow 5,” allowing, in the event of war, US submarines to establish and maintain “strategical [sic] areas” of operations throughout Japanese waters in which ships

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Talbott, “Weapons Development,” 61.

¹⁵⁴ “History of Submarine School,” 18.

¹⁵⁵ Quoted in Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ By July 1, 1945, sixty-three classes, totaling four hundred and thirty-four officers, had graduated from the course.

could conduct USW.¹⁵⁷ Though the correlation between the creation of the P.C.O. course and the approval of “Rainbow 5” is, at best, circumstantial, it nonetheless made the move to USW more practical.

While the United States and Japan teetered on the brink of war in 1941, the US Navy seesawed back and forth between following international treaties and pursuing commerce raiding *vis-à-vis* Unrestricted Submarine Warfare. Analysis of the war plan drafts from March, designated Rainbow Three, suggest that planners had no intention of using submarines to attack Japanese shipping.¹⁵⁸ Yet, only two months later Admiral Stark’s approval of Rainbow Five and its “strategical areas” created the possibility for USW.¹⁵⁹ In July, four months prior to the official adoption of the “Germany First” strategy, the navy transferred approximately fifteen percent of the modern submarines stationed at Pearl Harbor to the Atlantic, leaving twenty-seven of the boats in Admiral Husband Kimmel’s increasingly cannibalized Pacific Fleet.¹⁶⁰ Similarly, the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations (OPNAV) reassigned twelve submarines from Task Force (TF) Seven, Pacific Fleet (Pearl Harbor) to Admiral Thomas Hart’s Asiatic Fleet (Manila) in October.¹⁶¹ From their new location, sub skippers could better serve Rainbow Five’s plan to scout for the Japanese Combined Fleet near its home waters. In the same month, the navy continued to issue directives forbidding unrestricted torpedoing “unless justified by events after the outbreak” of war, meaning that American

¹⁵⁷ Talbott, “Weapons Development,” 63

¹⁵⁸ Miller, *War Plan Orange*, 294.

¹⁵⁹ Talbott, “Weapons Development,” 63.

¹⁶⁰ Miller, *War Plan Orange*, 278.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 295-7.

submariners would have to wait for Japan to draw first.¹⁶² In early November, the Asiatic Fleet received an additional eight modern submarines.¹⁶³ On November 27, 1941, Admiral Stark, CNO, cabled Admiral Thomas Hart, CINCAF the only known prewar orders for USW:

If formal war eventuates between U.S. and Japan quote Instructions for the Navy of the United States governing Maritime and Aerial Warfare unquote will be placed in effect but will be supplemented by additional instructions including authority to CINCAF to conduct unrestricted submarine and aerial warfare against Axis shipping...¹⁶⁴

Hart trusted that the CNO would make good on his promise. Two hours after the Japanese surprise attack against the US Pacific Fleet stationed at Pearl Harbor, Hart radioed to the Asiatic Fleet from his Manila headquarters to commence USW.¹⁶⁵ Four hours later, Stark sent out an official message from Washington to “Execute unrestricted air and submarine warfare against Japan.”¹⁶⁶

Despite any mixed intentions prior to Pearl Harbor, early prosecution of the submarine war against Japan proved that the US Navy had failed to prepare adequately for USW. As the Japanese invasion forces swept across the South Pacific, submarine crews attached to the Asiatic Fleet did their best to stem the tide, with limited results. In the month of March 1942, Asiatic submarines accounted for only two enemy ships sunk –

¹⁶² Ibid., 320.

¹⁶³ Talbot, “Weapons Development,” 65.

¹⁶⁴ Quoted in Ibid., 55.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 66.

¹⁶⁶ Quoted in Miller, *War Plan Orange*, 320.

one tanker and one aircraft ferry.¹⁶⁷ After the fall of Corregidor in early May, the navy assigned two officers, John Wilkes and Jimmy Fife, to compile a report assessing the successes and failures of the submarine offensive.¹⁶⁸ The news in the report was not good. The Wilkes-Fife Report estimated that, during the first four months of the war, submarine commanders had completed seventy-five war patrols, launching one hundred and thirty-six attacks that sank only thirty-six Japanese vessels.¹⁶⁹ The report also surmised that for every ship sunk, commanders had expended nearly ten torpedoes. Postwar numbers gathered from captured Japanese documents revealed that the Wilkes-Fife Report was overly optimistic. In truth, submarines only accounted for ten sinkings during the period, shifting the torpedo-to-sinking ratio to a staggering thirty-to-one.¹⁷⁰ The main problem, determined the navy, was overly cautious skippers. Because submarines operated independently from the fleet, prudent commanders all too often tucked tail and ran. Rumors about cowardly captains quickly spread throughout the fleet. Inspired by such tales, torpedo officer Doug Rhymes penned a poem entitled, “The Fearless Skipper.” Such a skipper, wrote Rhymes, never ran for cover “when everything is clear.”¹⁷¹

With conversational courage
 He talks a fearless fight.
 He’s a rough, tough hombre
 When nothing is in sight.

¹⁶⁷ Blair, *Silent Victory*, 168.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 174-80.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 178.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 177.

All hazards of navigation
Cause him no loss of sleep.
He cruises along most calmly
In water one mile deep.

His nerves are surely made of steel,
His voice has a confident sound,
And he never gets excited
When danger's not around.¹⁷²

Despite a plethora of contemporary theories, the navy had no way of knowing in advance what kind of skipper any given officer would become.¹⁷³ Through a painful series of trial by fire the navy slowly weeded out the ineffective commanders, and the submarine operations in the Pacific steadily improved.

Just like the country's navy, the American public entered the war with an uncertain idea of what it was their submarines would do. The lack of a well-defined cultural discourse meant that the wartime public needed an effective crash course in the navy's wartime use of the vessels. Interwar films about American submarines were few and far between, and did little to help the audience understand the nature of the United States Navy. The 1928 film, *Submarine*, stands out only because of its director – the legendary Frank Capra.¹⁷⁴ *Submarine* depicted the ships as instruments to complicate human drama. When two navy friends discover that they both love the same woman, tensions run high. After one sailor gets trapped in a submarine, his friend must rescue him, racked with guilt over their argument. John Ford's own excursion into the submarine genre, 1930's *Men Without Women*, yielded similar results.¹⁷⁵ Three years

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 178.

¹⁷⁴ *Submarine*, directed by Frank Capra, Columbia Pictures, 1928.

later, *Hell Below* hit theaters as the first true, blue submarine film.¹⁷⁶ Director Jack Conway gave audiences a taste of First World War naval battles, though he stretched the effectiveness of US submarines during the war. The film's fictional *AL-14* engaged and sank an enemy destroyer – quite a feat, considering that the real US submarines of the First World War failed to accomplish as much. Nonetheless, *Hell Below* at least gave American audiences a sense of what submarines *could* do in wartime: honorably fight enemy warships. Still, cultural apathy for submarines during the Great Depression, coupled with a ten-year hiatus within the film genre, limited the impact the 1933 film exerted over cultural perceptions.

In January 1943, just barely a year after the Pearl Harbor attack, Hollywood – specifically, Twentieth-Century Fox – gave American audiences a much-needed guide for understanding the role of US submarines in the on-going war. *Crash Dive* – starring Tyrone Power, Dana Andrews, and Anne Baxter – combined elements of the interwar sub-movies into an exciting, though highly propagandistic, wartime drama.¹⁷⁷ The film created a love triangle between Power, Andrews, and Baxter, set against the backdrop of the New London Submarine Base. Interspersed between romantic moments are the high-flying battle and underwater scenes that earned the film a 1943 Academy Award for Best Special Effects. Director Archie Mayo gave audiences a glimpse of the wartime navy, incorporating footage of real naval personnel at New London and other bases. For the admittance fee audiences received 105 minutes of action, adventure, romance, laughter, and public service announcements.

¹⁷⁵ *Men Without Women*, directed by John Ford, Fox Film Corporation, 1930.

¹⁷⁶ *Hell Below*, directed by Jack Conway, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1933.

¹⁷⁷ *Crash Dive*, directed by Archie Mayo, 1943.

The movie began with a scene the audience could easily connect with a popular memory of the First World War: German U-Boats prowling for innocent victims along the Atlantic Coast. As a lifeboat full of men, women, and children drift aimlessly across the ocean, a frail little boy comments that he hears a plane above. The survivors strain to hear the plane's engines, only to discover that the noise is, in fact, a flotilla of US PT Boats. One PT Skipper, Lieutenant Ward Stewart (Tyrone Power), steers his boat toward the crowd. While preparing to transfer the civilians aboard ship, the sailors spot a submarine periscope in the distance. Racing to intercept the submerged ship, Stewart remarks, "Sub's been stalking that lifeboat trying to knock off a rescue ship. We'll see what we can do for him."¹⁷⁸ Stewart and his crew successfully depth charge and sink the Hun submarine, gaining acclaiming in national newspapers. Upon returning to port, Stewart receives orders to transfer immediately to New London.

The opening scene with the PT boats battling the U-Boat attached the film to previous cultural perceptions and began the process of steering the audience toward a new wartime discourse. Filmmakers used the main character of Lt. Stewart as an on-screen surrogate for the American public. Upon arriving at New London, Stewart reports to the Commandant's office, finding instead his Uncle Bob – a navy admiral. While the two men discuss the events of the opening scene, Stewart brags, "That U-Boat never had a chance. As a matter of fact, no submarine has much of a chance against those PT Boats."¹⁷⁹ Stewart's words serve as reassurance that the US Navy could easily control the U-Boat menace. As the conversation progresses, the admiral takes pains to point out

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., Opening scene.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., New London scene.

that submariners, at least American submariners, are good men who are much needed for the war effort, but that there is a serious shortage of trained officers.

The admiral's comments proved valid in the real world. A December 1939 letter from the Commander of the Submarine Force to the Bureau of Navigation "recommended that the Bureau's policy for transferring previously qualified submarine men to recommissioned destroyers be discontinued," as it had bled the service dry.¹⁸⁰ The fictional Stewart, for example, had trained as a submariner and served in that branch of the navy for two years before transferring to the larger "battle wagons" of the fleet. Despite Uncle Bob's reasoning, Stewart frankly retorted that "As far as I'm concerned, it's no life for a dog...even a sea dog. I'd much rather sink 'em than sail 'em any day."¹⁸¹ Stewart's stance represented that of the American public: still not overly warm to submarines, and in need of some "reeducation." "Well, my boy," Uncle Bob responded to Stewart, and *ipso facto* the audience, "looks like you're gonna sail 'em." The young lieutenant furrowed his brow, dropped his shoulders, and let out a sigh of discontentment, not unlike a child who has just been told to eat his broccoli. Like any fatherly figure, Uncle Bob smiles and tries to make Stewart understand:

Uncle Bob:
You think I'm tied to my desk in Washington because I enjoy it? No, sir. I'm serving where I'm needed most, and you're being assigned where you're needed most.

Stewart (slowly shaking his head in acknowledgment):
If I may say so, those PTs are a work of art!

¹⁸⁰ "History of Submarine School," Officer-in-Charge, Submarine School to Submarine Base Secretary, 11 July 1945, SUBSCOL DOC:01, Documents and Publications: Alphabetical Topics, A-R, File: History – 1916-1945, Submarine Force, Ct.

¹⁸¹ *Crash Dive*, Mayo, New London scene.

Uncle Bob:
So are the subs.¹⁸²

In order to be of use to the war effort, Stewart and the audience had to accept both their specific roles and the fact the submarines were a vital part of the navy.

The initial appearance of the film's supporting character, Lieutenant Commander Dewey Connors (Dana Andrews), served to juxtapose the pristine ideals of Stewart with the stark realities of submarine warfare. Standing on the New London docks, Connors – commanding officer of the *USS Corsair* – talks with the ship's chief petty officer, both men frustrated that they have waited weeks for a new executive officer (XO) so that they could go on patrol.¹⁸³ A day of manual labor aboard the *Corsair* had taken its toll on Connors's appearance. When the base commandant brings Stewart, slated to become Connors's XO, to meet the ship's captain, the disparity between the two men's appearance becomes apparent. Stewart, wearing a clean black uniform with his jacket pressed and tie straight, stood erect opposite his new commanding officer. The disheveled Connors, his kaki work uniform wrinkled and dirty with oil smears, fished through his pockets, coming up with a crushed, empty cigarette pack. Trying to be friendly, Stewart holds out his gleaming brass cigarette case as an offering to Connors. Director Archie Mayo let the shot of the two men facing each other linger a moment to drive home the differences between them – Stewart as the culturally reluctant submariner, and Connors as the bringer of a dirty reality.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid., New London docks scene.

The contrasting worlds of Stewart and Connors intersect with the movie's leading lady, school teacher Jean Hewlett (Anne Baxter), who serves as a conduit for debate between choosing what is safe versus what is right. Hewlett, a teacher at a New London boarding school for girls, is the long-time girlfriend and not-quite fiancée of Lt. Commander Connors. Early in the film, Hewlett takes a small group of her students to tour the nation's capital at Washington, D.C. Also headed to the busy wartime hub is none other than Lt. Stewart, having received weekend leave before reporting to the *Corsair*. Hewlett and Stewart have their "meet-cute" aboard the D.C.-bound train.¹⁸⁴ After accidentally retiring for the evening in the wrong berth, Stewart is happily surprised to find a beautiful woman climbing into bed with him. Hewlett, upon discovering the smiling young Stewart in her bed, is decidedly less-than-thrilled. Once in D.C., Stewart learns that the tables have turned when he sees Hewlett begging the desk clerk at the Capitol Hotel for a room.¹⁸⁵ The wily lieutenant phones the front desk and tells the clerk to give Hewlett his own room. Stewart later arrives in his room, faking anger, and threatens to call a house detective in order to get to the bottom of Hewlett's "treachery." After allowing Hewlett to bat her eyelashes for a while, Stewart relents, "I'm against appeasement, as a rule, but in this case, I'm willing to discuss a negotiated peace." Realizing that she's been blackmailed into having dinner with the handsome stranger, Hewlett retorts, "That isn't gold on your uniform – it's brass." In spite of her reservations, Hewlett spends the night on the town with Stewart, not returning to the hotel until after 3am.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., Train to Washington scene.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., Washington, Capitol Hotel scene.

Hewlett's encounters with the devil-may-care Stewart led her to question the stable life offered by a union with the careful Connors. Back in New London, Hewlett's girlfriend refers to Connors as Hewlett's "Rock of Gibraltar," and the "rocks" were worth marrying.¹⁸⁶ Connors later tells Hewlett that they can get married after he becomes a fully-ranked commander, as the additional pay grade would cover both the wedding costs and "subsequent upkeep."¹⁸⁷ Still fearful of what may happen while waiting for Connors's promotion, Hewlett quietly acquiesces to postpone marriage. As the school teacher waits throughout the movie, she continues to encounter Stewart in New London. Eventually, the lieutenant wins over the object of his affection, giving her his Naval Academy class ring as sign of engagement.

Crash Dive's love triangle serves both to entertain audiences and to promote an approach to life, and to war, that creates and seizes opportunities for victory. In the movie's on-shore world, Stewart's bull-headed, unrelenting approach – though initially shocking – proves more capable than Connors's more traditional, slow-but-steady courting methods. Each man's romantic personality spills over into the way with which he executes his official duties. While on their first patrol aboard the *Corsair*, the two men and their crew spend over twenty days slowly combing a small section of the North Atlantic. The impatient Stewart scoffs that he could sweep through the entirety of the same sea with a PT Boat in just half the time.¹⁸⁸ A few days later, Connors bottoms the boat to avoid depth charges, opting to play it safe by playing opossum. Again, Stewart

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., New London, boarding school scene.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., New London, Officers' Club scene.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., First Patrol, North Atlantic scene.

muses, “If only I were up there in one of those PT Boats.” In an effort to fool the surface ship, Connors orders the crew to shoot trash through the torpedo tubes and pump fuel into the sea, creating a false debris field. When Connors hits his head and loses consciousness after a nearby depth charge explodes, Stewart takes command and makes a daring run for the surface, torpedoing the enemy warship before it can sink the submarine. Combining the ideals and tactics embodied by Stewart and Connors, the film suggested, would create a winning strategy. Later on deck, Connors tells Stewart, “I’m thinking that someday they’ll make a torpedo [PT] boat that’ll submerge.” “That’s funny you should mention that, Captain,” Stewart returns, “‘cause I’ve been thinking of a way to make a submarine go fifty knots.” Like the real submariners in the early months of 1942, the fictional duo found that daring and tenacity, tempered with a bit caution, yielded winning results.

The film also revealed the importance of the sailors’ cultural identity. According to the Vernian Model, submarines – and other vessels – assume society’s cultural perceptions about the men running them. The enemy ship that forced Connors to bottom the *Corsair* was a German Q-Ship. The British Navy created the Q-Ship concept during the First World War by converting merchant ships into heavily armed men-of-war.¹⁸⁹ Despite the use of “guile, trickery, and ambush” – words often associated with U-Boats – Britain praised the efforts Q-Ship commanders and their crews.¹⁹⁰ The most celebrated such commander was Gordon Campbell, responsible for sinking three U-Boats with his deck guns.¹⁹¹ Fleet Admiral John Jellicoe reported that Campbell had “a record of

¹⁸⁹ Robert K. Massie, *Castles of Steel: Britain, Germany, and the Winning of the Great War at Sea*, (New York: Random House, 2003), 717-725.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 722.

gallantry, endurance and discipline which has never been surpassed afloat or ashore.”¹⁹² Ironically, one of Campbell’s gallant methods for tricking U-Boat commanders involved dressing a member of the crew in women’s clothing and instructing the sailor to carry a bundle that represented a baby.¹⁹³ Nonetheless, British Q-Ships received admiration because they were British. In *Crash Dive*, the perception of an evil submarine and a noble Q-Ship reverse to reflect the crews manning each vessel. Such a role reversal allowed the film to modify and reinforce discourse that placed Americans within submarines.

As an educational experience for American cultural discourse, *Crash Dive* concluded with a review of the lessons the audience needed to remember during the war. When newly-wedded Stewart and Hewlett pay a visit to Stewart’s grandmother, they find Uncle Bob at the house as well. Hewlett and the grandmother excuse themselves, allowing the two navy men a chance to chat about the war effort. Stewart, once again assuming the role of the American public, begins explaining what his experiences aboard the *Corsair* have taught him. In what quickly turns into a Public Service Announcement, Stewart extols that the various branches of the navy – from submarines and PT Boats to aircraft carriers and battleships – all have their own jobs to do. Working in concert with each other, these elements of the modern navy will win the war together.

And it isn’t all ships – it’s men. The men behind the guns of the PT Boats, and the submarines, and the Coast Guard ships, and the minelayers, and the tenders, and the tankers, and the troopships. The men that take them out, that fight

¹⁹² Quoted in Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

their way over and land them there. That's the navy – the United States Navy!¹⁹⁴

Although the movie did not create the perception of Americans manning submarines, it did encourage the audience to warm to the idea of a weapon with an uncertain wartime role.

The only other American wartime submarine film served to define the war with Japan and further complicate the perception of US submarines. *Destination Tokyo* hit theaters in 1944, bringing with it a message that the war with Japan was one dominated by race.¹⁹⁵ The film juxtaposed the God-fearing white Americans with the savage yellow Japanese. The on-screen adaptation of the submarine reconnaissance mission completed for the Doolittle Raid starred Cary Grant as Captain Cassidy of the *USS Copperfin*. Preparing to depart from San Francisco on a secret mission, Cassidy writes to his wife. On his desk, the captain has three pictures – one each of his wife, daughter, and son – placed next to a book entitled *Racial Theory*.¹⁹⁶ In his letter, Cassidy tells his wife that he hopes “the chicken pox didn’t leave any marks on that sweet face” of his daughter. Throughout the movie, sailors aboard the *Copperfin* continuously talk about sweethearts, mom, and apple pie – all the Americana “stuff” for which they fought. *En route* to the Aleutian Islands, one sailor boasts that the ship will sink an astounding seventy thousand tons of enemy shipping. When prodded by his mates as to why he is so optimistic, the

¹⁹⁴ *Crash Dive*, Mayo, final scene.

¹⁹⁵ *Destination Tokyo*, directed by Delmer Daves, Warner Brothers Pictures, 1944. For a more developed discussion of the Pacific War’s racial implications, see John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1996). Dower briefly mentions *Destination Tokyo* in passing, but fails to fully explore the racial overtones included in the movie.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, Christmas Eve, San Francisco docks scene.

sailor replies, “Where I go there’s gonna be dead Japs.”¹⁹⁷ Later in the Aleutians, the ship’s cook – who is conspicuously white, instead of black¹⁹⁸ – muses while fishing, “You know, I’d sure like to hook an Aleutian salmon. Cute if I opened him up and there was a Jap in there. Fried Jap and tartar sauce.” “I’ll take mine boiled in oil,” returns a nearby sailor.¹⁹⁹ Racial slurs permeate the sailors’ dialogue, often times substituting “Japs” with “Nips” or “Snipes.” Even the Captain fires off the occasional reference to the “Nips.” Defining the war in such a way allowed filmmakers and audiences alike to justify and accept the methods that would bring the final victory.

Both *Crash Dive* and *Destination Tokyo* alluded to the “identity crisis” noted by historian Stephanie Cousineau. *Crash Dive* included a scene in which a portion of the *Corsair*’s crew snuck into a secret Nazi base.²⁰⁰ During that point in the movie, the submariners became commandos and saboteurs. As part of its mission in *Destination Tokyo*, the members of the *Copperfin*’s crew ran reconnaissance operations within Tokyo Bay and on the Japanese coastline as though they were spies. Additionally, the *Copperfin* rescued a Japanese aviator in the Aleutian Islands, similar to its real-life counterparts who spent many wartime patrols fishing downed Allied pilots out of the Pacific. Finally, both fictional submarines engaged in more traditional submarine roles: attacking and sinking enemy warships. While neither film addressed the issue of commerce raiding, they nonetheless painted the submarine’s strategic role with broad strokes. Additionally, both

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., *en route* to Aleutians scene.

¹⁹⁸ Traditionally, submarines in the Second World War had one black sailor who served as the cook.

¹⁹⁹ *Destination Tokyo*, Daves, Aleutians scene.

²⁰⁰ *Crash Dive*, Mayo, U-Boat base scene.

films reinforced the need – under the guise of national security – for “silence.” When the *Copperfin* returned from its harrowing adventures in Japanese waters, two men working on the Golden Gate Bridge spot the submarine. “You think that sub down there saw any action?” asked one. “Nah,” replied the other, “probably just out for a couple of practice dives.”²⁰¹ No matter what submarines actually did – reconnaissance, rescue, sabotage, or battle – the Americans only needed to nod quietly in appreciation.

While the American public learned to accept the uncertain role of submarines, submarine commanders and crews likewise learned their craft of commerce raiding. The slow start of 1942 yielded only 182 Japanese ships sunk.²⁰² As more cautious sub skippers fell by the wayside and the remaining commanders adopted more practical approaches to commerce raiding, the American numbers improved. Commenting on the failed tactics that hampered early attempts at commerce raiding, one submariner recalled years later:

Say your objective is to contact all the commuters who live in a town outside New York. The way they went about it would be comparable to going to each individual commuter in his home. The most efficient way to find them is not like that but at the railway station when they’re all bunched together, trying to get on the same trains.²⁰³

US submarines in the Pacific accounted for 135 vessels in 1943.²⁰⁴ 1944 proved disastrous to the Japanese tanker fleet – completely obliterated by the submerged arm of the US Navy – along with the country’s other lost ships that numbered 603 during the

²⁰¹ *Destination Tokyo*, Daves, final scene.

²⁰² Holwitt, *Execute Against Japan*, 165.

²⁰³ Quoted in Blair, *Silent Victory*, 179.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

year.²⁰⁵ The numbers of sunken ships declined sharply in 1945 due to the fact that the Japanese merchant and military fleets had all but disappeared. All told, US Submarines sank nearly five million tons of Japanese commercial vessels and half a million tons of warships.²⁰⁶ In the words of Theodore Roscoe, “The atomic bomb was the funeral pyre of an enemy who had been drowned.”²⁰⁷

The death of the Japanese Empire brought with it the death of an ambiguous American submarine discourse. In the years immediately after 1945, writers – mostly submariners – took great strides to tell their countrymen about the numerous victories enjoyed by US submarines during the war. Hollywood leapt on the increased postwar interest in Second World War seafaring stories, creating a boom in submarine-inspired movies. As the US Navy slowly divulged the true extent of submarine activities in the Pacific, it helped replace the discourse about a branch of the military that was formerly “Silent as the Grave” with one that came to symbolize “The Flagship of Freedom.”

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 166.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.. Specifically, US subs sank 4,779,902 tons of the merchant fleet and 540,192 tons of the Imperial Navy.

²⁰⁷ Roscoe, *United States Submarine Operations*, 495.

CHAPTER IV

FLAGSHIP OF FREEDOM

[The *George Washington*] is, like all nuclear powered submarines, a true submarine in the sense that it is not dependent on the earth's atmosphere for its operation. It, with its Polaris missile, is the first naval weapon system to be specifically designed for strategic employment against land targets and adds an entirely new dimension to our naval power. Knowing the tremendous destructive potential of the lethal cargos that will be carried by submarines, no attacker could hope to escape retribution, even given the advantage of striking the first blow. ~ Wildred J. McNeil, Assistant Secretary of Defense, at the launching of USS *George Washington*, June 1959.²⁰⁸

American submarines of the Cold War had a clearly-defined purpose, generated by a well-articulated cultural discourse. The submarine service's previous search for identity ended as the threat of Soviet nuclear capabilities intersected with technological innovation and cultural embracing of submarines in the decade following 1945. A veritable perfect storm had come together by the time that the *George Washington* put to sea in mid-1959. First, writers began educating the American public as to the extent of submarine activities in the Pacific War – most notably Samuel Eliot Morison, Theodore Roscoe, and Edward L. Beach. Although the popularity of the quasi-official histories published by Morison and Roscoe paled in comparison with that of Beach's fictional writing, each author contributed to the post-war cultural buzz that Hollywood exploited with its submarine genre movies. One of the twelve 1950s submarine films was MGM's on-screen adaptation of Beach's novel, *Run Silent, Run Deep*.²⁰⁹ In 1954, the same year that the Soviet Union detonated its first Hydrogen bomb, the US Navy commissioned its

²⁰⁸ Quoted in Norman Polmar, *Atomic Submarines* (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1963), 220.

²⁰⁹ *Run Silent, Run Deep*, directed by Robert Wise, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1958.

first nuclear powered submarine, the not-so-fictional *Nautilus*.²¹⁰ By 1957, the Navy had approved the creation of the Polaris Fleet Ballistic Missile program – the ultimate deterrent for checking Soviet aggression.²¹¹ Armed with Polaris-type Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs), early Cold War US submarines could rain nuclear death and destruction in the event of a Soviet first strike. All of these elements came together immediately after the Second World War to create the cultural discourse this study identifies as The Flagship of Freedom.

The roots of the Retaliatory School's thesis first appeared with the outbreak of war in 1941. On December 7th, Admiral Richmond Turner – head of the navy's war planning division – commented that, "In retaliation for Japanese bombing of open towns in Oahu...orders had been given to U.S. Submarines in the Pacific to sink at sight Japanese merchant ships of all types."²¹² When President Franklin Roosevelt addressed the nation on December 8th, he proclaimed that "No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory."²¹³ Although a few days later Roosevelt assured the nation that the war was not one of "vengeance,"²¹⁴ his better-remembered Infamy Speech nonetheless provided a mandate that allowed for any and all means of victory, including Unrestricted Submarine Warfare. During the Nuremburg trials in 1946, Admiral Chester

²¹⁰ Polmar, *Atomic Submarines*, 85; 201.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 207.

²¹² Quoted in Talbott, "Weapons Development..." 54.

²¹³ Franklin D. Roosevelt, *My Friends: Twenty-Eight History Making Speeches* (Buffalo: Foster and Stewart, 1945), 146.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 101.

Nimitz, who assumed command of the Pacific Fleet following the Pearl Harbor attack, submitted an affidavit assuring that the submarine war in the Pacific had been “an act of reprisal against Japan.”²¹⁵ The righteous might of justifiable wartime policies and tactics successfully laid the groundwork for postwar cultural discourse.

The earliest histories of the submarine war mimicked wartime rhetoric by filtering the memory of USW through the lens of justifiable retaliation. Samuel Eliot Morison – the father of the Retaliatory School²¹⁶ – began his 1949 discussion of American submarines with the acknowledgement that the country had, as a signatory of the London Naval Treaty, agreed to abide by the pre-existing laws governing commerce raiding by refraining from USW.²¹⁷ Before delving into the country’s obvious flouting of international treaty, Morison provided his readers with a context for such actions.

Treaty and doctrine alike went by the board on the first day of the war, when the Chief of Naval Operations issued the terse order, “Execute unrestricted submarine and air warfare against Japan.” The enemy, by his calculated breach of treaties and international law at Pearl Harbor, had absolved the United States from observing any rule restricting methods of naval warfare unless dictated by self-interest or the danger of retaliation. After 7 December 1941 combatant ships were still considered prime targets, but the employment of submarines to lance the arteries of enemy trade now became of major importance.²¹⁸

The same year, Theodore Roscoe published his own work on the submarine war, though his style of writing was harsher than Morison’s. Roscoe’s work begins with chapter

²¹⁵ Talbott, “Weapons Development” 54.

²¹⁶ As noted in the introduction, the Retaliatory School contends that the US move to USW in the Pacific came as a direct result of the attack at Pearl Harbor.

²¹⁷ Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations*, 189.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 190.

entitled, “Holocaust at Pearl Harbor,” in which he gave a brief overview of the attack.²¹⁹

Moving on, the author asserted that “there were to be no merchant ships in the Pacific for the duration of the war.”²²⁰

Armed or not, these merchantmen were in effect combatant ships. “Transports,” “freighters,” “tankers” were hollow titles for auxiliaries of war, and it was the realistic duty of the submarine forces to reduce these ships to hulls as hollow as their titles. The polite little law book went overboard.²²¹

Both authors maintained the veneer of justifiability by pointing to the official order for USW that CNO Stark issued six hours *after* the attack. As the authors saw it, prior to December 7, 1941, the United States had no intention of using submarines as commerce raiders. Intentions, real or perceived, helped guide early postwar memory of the submarine campaign.

At the outset of the 1950s, Hollywood’s “Decade of the Submarine”²²² began and effectively cornered the market of postwar submarine memory. During these ten years, audiences had frequent opportunities to experience the on-screen submarine war in the form of twelve movies dedicated to wartime plots.²²³ Nearly all of these films had the

²¹⁹ Roscoe, *United States Submarine Operations*, 3-11.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² Phrase coined by this study.

²²³ *Operation Disaster*, directed by Roy Ward Baker, Jay Lewis Productions, 1950; *Operation Pacific*, directed by George Waggner, Warner Brothers Pictures, 1951; *Submarine Command*, directed by John Farrow, Paramount Pictures, 1951; *Torpedo Alley*, directed by Lew Landers, Allied Artists Pictures, 1953; *Above Us the Waves*, directed by Ralph Thomas, Pinewood Studios, 1956; *Hellcats of the Navy*, directed by Nathan Juran, Morningside Productions, 1957; *Run Silent, Run Deep*, directed by Robert Wise, Metro Goldwyn Mayer, 1958; *Submarine Seahawk*, directed by Spencer Gordon Bennet, Golden State Productions, 1958; *Torpedo Run*, directed by Joseph Pevney, Metro Goldwyn Mayer, 1958; *Battle of Coral Sea*, directed by Paul Wendkos, Morningside Productions, 1959; *Operation Petticoat*, directed by Blake

same style of high-tension, fast-paced dramatic storylines.²²⁴ Although every submarine movie in the period helped to join the world of scholarly history with that of popular memory, the film *Run Silent, Run Deep* did so more than its contemporaries.

In 1955, Commander Edward L. Beach published a fictional account of the underwater Pacific War entitled, *Run Silent, Run Deep*.²²⁵ A veteran of the war, Beach had served as executive officer aboard the *Trigger* and *Tirante*, and in 1945 assumed command of his own ship, the *Piper*.²²⁶ Beach's credentials were impeccable: second in his class at Annapolis (1939), first in his class at New London's SUBSCOL, successfully completed over ten war patrols, and known as "one of the outstanding young submariners of all times."²²⁷ At the beginning of his novel, the author told readers that "the motivation, events, and action herein set forth are representative of that brave period between 1941 and 1945 when many of us unwittingly realized our highest purpose in life. To that extent, and with these qualifications, this book, though fiction, is true."²²⁸ When executives at MGM released their adaptation of *Run Silent, Run Deep* in 1958, they gave audiences a movie saturated with the main theme that dominated the 1950s subgenre of war films: justified USW executed by courageous submariners.

The director and producers of *Run Silent, Run Deep* made it clear that US submarines had operated under orders to sink both Japanese military and merchant ships.

Edwards, Universal International Pictures, 1959; and *Up Periscope*, directed by Gordon Douglas, Warner Brothers Pictures, 1959.

²²⁴ The notable exception to the films' uniformity is *Operation Petticoat* (1959) which added a strong comedic element to the movie's typical submarine plot.

²²⁵ Edward L. Beach, *Run Silent, Run Deep* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1955).

²²⁶ Blair, *Silent Victory*, 404, 817, 846.

²²⁷ Ibid., 404, 817.

²²⁸ Beach, *Run Silent*, xi-xii.

In the film's opening scene, Commander PJ Richardson (Clark Gable) attacks a Japanese convoy of merchant ships before an explosion destroys his submarine in turn.²²⁹ A year later, Richardson commands the submarine *Nerka* and heads back to the same area to find and sink the enemy destroyer, nicknamed Bungo Pete, believed responsible for the sinking of four US submarines. Giving the crew a summary of their orders, Richardson says, "Number one, and I'm sure you've heard this many times, sink enemy shipping."²³⁰ Upon arriving in his designated area of operations, Richardson spots a destroyer escorting a tanker and quickly devises his plan of attack. "We'll wait until the destroyer passes clear, then we'll take on the tanker."²³¹ After taking out the tanker, the captain turns straight toward the warship, firing a spread of torpedoes that strikes the ship along the bow causing it to sink. Toward the movie's end, the *Nerka* engages in an underwater standoff with a Japanese submarine guarding a convoy. The US crew realizes that there is only one way to win – force the enemy to the surface by attacking the convoy of merchantmen. The tactic pays off, and the *Nerka* lives to continue its campaign of attrition.

While the practice of USW pervades the film's plot, *Run Silent, Run Deep* – like the works of Morison and Roscoe – provided viewers with a context to justify such tactics. After a failed attempt to defeat Bungo Pete, the *Nerka* turns toward Pearl Harbor. Listening to a transmission by Tokyo Rose in which she claims that the submarine sank, executive officer Jim Bledsoe (Burt Lancaster) finds it odd that she lists the names of the

²²⁹ *Run Silent, Run Deep*, opening scene.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, En Route to Area 7 scene.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, Entering Area 7 scene.

crew, even calling one man by a nickname he earned on patrol! A quick investigation reveals that Japanese fishermen must have gone through the submarine's overboard trash and alerted the Imperial Navy to the *Nerka*'s presence. By including this subplot, the film made Japanese civilians complicit in military actions and therefore fair game. The movie built on these images of sneaky Japanese naval tactics with the revelation of how Bungo Pete had managed to sink the previous four submarines sent into the Bungo Straits. With the odds stacked against the Americans, audiences could sympathize with the wartime practice of USW.

Run Silent, Run Deep also addressed the wartime problem of overly-cautious skippers. As the *Nerka* heads out on patrol, Richardson subjects the crew to constant drilling. One night a watchmen spots an enemy submarine off the stern running perpendicular to their location, but Richardson orders the crew to maintain their course. Bledsoe warns the captain that the *Nerka* "hates showing her backside" to the enemy.²³² Below decks, the crew debates Richardson's actions. "That Jap sub and all these drills – the captain must be runnin' scared," worries the cook. Another sailor jokes, "You're all confused, my friend. We're on a drill patrol, here." Continuing on, he teases that Richardson plans "to challenge the Japs to a drill. The winner's gonna get an all-expense paid honeymoon trip with Tokyo Rose in the Bungo Straits." Even the officers express frustration at running from a fight. One man sarcastically exclaims, "Let us pay tribute to that great motto: caution with safety and safety with caution," as he raises a glass to the "drill master." Privately, Bledsoe confronts Richardson.

It's one thing to drill a crew for fighting, but when you
duck a Jap sub they wonder why they should break their
backs on drills when the captain has no stomach for

²³² Ibid., En Route to Area 7 scene.

attacking. “What does he want? Obedience? Efficiency?
Or the best drill cowards in the navy?”

In a scene reminiscent of Doug Rhymes’ wartime poem, “The Fearless Skipper,” *Run Silent, Run Deep* showed audiences that there was no place in the navy for “drill cowards.” When taken together, submarine films of the 1950s like *Run Silent, Run Deep* used postwar memory to garner support for a new breed of submariners who emerged as Cold Warriors.

While the American public underwent a decade-long cultural education courtesy of Hollywood, the navy prepared to unveil its first line of defense against a contemporary Soviet threat. When the USSR detonated its first Hydrogen bomb in 1954, it brought with it a renewed fear of nuclear destruction.²³³ In November 1955, the Department of Defense ordered a joint Army-Navy project to develop a “fifteen hundred-mile intermediate range ballistic missile (IRBM)” called Jupiter.²³⁴ Because no existing solid fuels could handle an IRBM payload, Jupiter missiles relied on liquid fuel, making them large – too large for submarines – and cumbersome.²³⁵ In the hopes of mating ballistic missiles with the newly commissioned nuclear submarines, director of the navy’s Special Projects Office, Admiral William Rayborn, approved a long-range, solid-fuel missile system, Polaris, in late 1956.²³⁶ Before the navy could officially begin Polaris development, Rayborn had to gain the approval of Defense Secretary Charles Wilson. In

²³³ Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb’s Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 352-354. Boyer notes that much of the nuclear fear from the mid-1950s focused on the possibility of nuclear fallout. Nonetheless, the Soviet capabilities demonstrated by their H-Bomb likely fueled worries as well.

²³⁴ Polmar, *Atomic Submarines*, 201.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 201-6.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 206-7.

a meeting with Wilson, Rayborn illustrated how the move to a solid-fuel missile would save half a billion dollars in transport cost by requiring fewer ships to move the smaller weapon. The heretofore unimpressed Defense Secretary perked up and said with a smile, “You’ve shown me a lot of sexy slides, young man, but that’s the sexiest, that half-billion dollar saving.”²³⁷ By January 1, 1957, the navy had approved the “sexy” Polaris Fleet Ballistic Missile program.

In order to underscore the strategic importance of Polaris submarines, the navy broke a long-standing tradition of naming the vessels for marine life. Chief of the Bureau of Naval Personnel Vice Admiral H.P. Smith announced in October 1958 that, under White House directive, new submarines would bear the names of “distinguished Americans who were known for their devotion for [sic] freedom.”²³⁸ Commanders James Osborn, Harold Shear, and William Simms, all veterans of the Pacific submarine war, would command the *George Washington*, *Patrick Henry*, and *Theodore Roosevelt*, respectively.²³⁹ Additionally, Smith noted, these new submarines would have two dedicated crews – designated “Gold” and “Blue” – that would enable the ships to stay at sea longer, with briefer stays in port. As soon as one crew departed, their counterparts would board the submarine with fresh provisions and redeploy.²⁴⁰ Symbolically, the message was strong: the nation’s revered forefathers would keep a constant vigil and protect their descendants during the uncertain days of the Cold War. By 1966, a

²³⁷ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 207.

²³⁸ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 216.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 214.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 215.

projected total of forty-one Polaris submarines would stand guard over the nation, earning the nickname, “41 For Freedom.”²⁴¹

Although the new defenders of freedom met with a favorable response, a 1961 naval directive indicated the fragility of public perception at the dawn of the Polaris age. In November of that year, historian Samuel Flagg Bemis dropped a bombshell on the naval community. At the Naval War College, Bemis presented a paper entitled, “Submarine Warfare in the Strategy of American Defense and Diplomacy, 1915-1945,” in which he revealed that the navy had decided to conduct a campaign of USW weeks, perhaps months, before the Pearl Harbor attack.²⁴² Bemis’ argument directly attacked the Retaliatory School’s thesis and undermined the popular memory of the war formed during the 1950s. The navy blocked any possibility of publication by classifying the research until 1978. Reluctantly, Bemis hid his work from the world, writing that “It is not considered in the public interest to publish this study at the present time.”²⁴³ The “time” of which Bemis wrote was indeed a precarious moment in the American submarines’ history – the *George Washington* was less than two years old, the navy had begun receiving installments of the *Ethan Allen*-class Polaris systems, and thirty-one of the “41 For Freedom” still required extensive funding. With Bemis’ discovery locked away, the American public had no reason to question the glorious history of American submarines in the Pacific War, and *ipso facto*, in the current Cold War. Building on the pristine and guarded reputation of this latest generation of submariners, the navy could

²⁴¹ Ibid., 243.

²⁴² Talbott, “Weapons Development” 54-5.

²⁴³ Quoted in Ibid., 55.

meet unforeseen Soviet threats with continuing advances in submerged warfare that enjoyed growing popularity among the nation's citizenry.

As the navy readied the last Polaris submarine for duty in 1966, the Pentagon began studying its possible replacement. In response to the potential of increasingly advanced Soviet ICBMs, the two-year study designated "Strat-X" explored a range of next-generation deterrents, including the Trident ballistic missile.²⁴⁴ Official research and development of Trident and a platform to carry and deploy it began in 1967. Over a decade of refinement went into producing the "quietest, fastest, and deadliest ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) in the world."²⁴⁵ Finally, in 1981, the navy officially received the duty-ready lead boat of the Trident generation – *Ohio*.²⁴⁶ By creating yet another naming precedent with the latest nuclear deterrent, the navy shifted its evocation of cultural images from America's past to its present, directly enlisting the country's citizenry as Cold Warriors. By the fall of the Soviet Union in late 1991, the navy had commissioned eleven more Trident submarines – the final two being *West Virginia* (1990) and *Kentucky* (1991). A case study of how West Virginians reacted to news of the forthcoming submarine reveals broad trends that characterized submarine discourse in the late Cold War.²⁴⁷

Early efforts to name a nuclear submarine after the Mountain State reveal regional competition and patriotic yearnings. Within two weeks of the *Ohio*'s launching, Ruth

²⁴⁴ Larry Schweikart and D. Douglas Dalglish, "The Trident Submarine in Bureaucratic Perspective," *Naval War College Review* 37, no. 2 (March/April 1984): 101.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 108.

²⁴⁷ The author chose to use *West Virginia* because of source availability/accessibility and to round out the study's periodization.

Campbell – mother of Commander Arlie Campbell, *Ohio*’s Potential Commanding Officer (PCO) – wrote to her senators, Jennings Randolph and Robert Byrd, to ask a favor.²⁴⁸ In the letter to Randolph, Campbell described the other submarines she had seen at the launching.²⁴⁹ After noting that work was already underway on the *Michigan* and *Georgia*, the housewife told the senior senator, “Please do use your influence to get the 3rd Trident named the West Virginia – wouldn’t that be wonderful?”²⁵⁰ Randolph’s reply arrived a few weeks later, bearing the news that he had “written the Secretary of the Navy and the Chief of Naval Operations to urge that the third Trident submarine be named the *West Virginia*.”²⁵¹ Despite Randolph’s swift actions, the US Navy was slow to move; by the time the senator retired in 1985, no plans to name a submarine after the state had materialized. Finally, at the urging of Senator Byrd in 1987, the Secretary of the Navy agreed to the idea originally put forth by Campbell.²⁵² Byrd called the announcement “great news. West Virginians have a distinguished history of patriotism and service to their country, and it is fitting to name this Naval [sic] vessel in honor of our state.”²⁵³ Noting that the state ranked first in the number of deaths for both Korea and Vietnam, as

²⁴⁸ *USS West Virginia* Commissioning Book, WHF Papers and Photographs, private collection.

²⁴⁹ Mrs. J.A. Campbell to Jennings Randolph, April 16, 1979, Jennings Randolph Collection, Box 18, Folder C15, West Virginia State Archives, Charleston, WV.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Jennings Randolph to Mr. and Mrs. J.A. Campbell, May 4, 1979, Jennings Randolph Collection, Box 18, Folder C15, West Virginia State Archives, Charleston, WV.

²⁵² “New Trident Submarine To Be USS West Virginia,” *Webster Echo*, December 22, 1987.

²⁵³ Ibid.

well as fourth for the Second World War, Byrd concluded that the new submarine represented “a well-deserved recognition of their sacrifices.”²⁵⁴

Fostering a bond between the vessel and its namesake state became an on-going task for naval and political leaders, but perhaps the most intimate connection came with the news that six West Virginians, two officers and four crewmen, would serve aboard the submarine. Citizens of Hampshire County were “very proud of one sailor that is in the vessel’s crew,” Kelly J. Jaeger.²⁵⁵ Jaeger, a former “outstanding student and athlete at Hampshire,” was a missile technician assigned to the *West Virginia*.²⁵⁶ The Hampshire County native described the new ship as “a Cadillac of the fleet” that would bear its name well.²⁵⁷ In a newspaper article, large pictures of the submarine featured prominently alongside pictures of Jaeger with his wife and baby. Reinforcing the idea of familial pride, the *Hampshire Review* observed that Jaeger’s grandmother, Dakota Caldwell, “beamed with pride last week as she talked of the upcoming events and the chance to see her grandson once again.”²⁵⁸ *West Virginia* was more than a pile of high-tech metallurgy; by serving as the home of actual state natives, *West Virginia* became West Virginia.

Prior to the christening and commissioning, Captain James Harvey and his crew took a proactive approach to ensure that their sponsor state formed a close relationship with the submarine. During Memorial Day weekend of 1989, Harvey and three crewmen enjoyed a visit to their sponsor city of Wheeling where they were special guests of the

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ “Doing His Job – USS WV,” *Hampshire Review*, October 17, 1990.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

mayor and American Legion Post One.²⁵⁹ The crew made frequent visits to the state: spending time at the West Virginia Children's Home; participating in the Cherry River Navy Maneuvers at Richwood, WV; whitewater rafting along the New River; serving as guests at the annual Sternwheel Regatta in Charleston and the Italian Heritage Festival in Clarksburg. The state's land-grant school, West Virginia University, hosted a special Navy Day as part of the West Virginia-South Carolina football game in Morgantown on September 15, 1989.²⁶⁰ Twenty-five crewmen, along with Admiral Arlie Campbell and other officers, spent the day as personal guests of University President N.S. Bucklew. Both the crew and the state's citizenry did their part to embrace one another as friends and family. Harvey wrote that his goal was "to better acquaint us about this great state and its citizens and most importantly acquaint the state's citizens with their new Trident Submarine that will inherit the history and the proud name of the previous USS WEST VIRGINIA (ACR-5) and USS WEST VIRGINIA (BB-48)."²⁶¹

Harvey may not have realized it at the time, but the history of the *West Virginia* (BB-48) was inescapable. The designation BB-48 identified the submarine's predecessor as a battleship. On the morning of December 7, 1941 *West Virginia* sat in the water of Pearl Harbor, caddy-cornered from the *Arizona*. Like its sister, *West Virginia* sank from damages sustained during the Japanese attack; however, the navy raised and repaired the ship.

²⁵⁹ "New Construction Status Report Number Five, 10 September 1989," USS West Virginia Folder, Event Subseries, Memorabilia Series, Robert C. Byrd Congressional Collection [Hereafter cited as USS West Virginia, Byrd Collection]; Robert C. Byrd Center for Legislative Studies (Shepherd University, WV).

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

Like a vengeful ghost reappearing from the dead, the USS WEST VIRGINIA (BB48) rose from the murky bottom of Pearl Harbor to unleash a retaliatory fury on the enemy for a full year preceding the Japanese surrender.²⁶²

The navy decorated the battleship with five battle stars for its actions in the Pacific War. Every year, West Virginia newspapers remind readers of the state's connection to Pearl Harbor, keeping the memory of the battleship alive. When news spread about the new Trident *West Virginia*, every article referenced the ship's predecessor and its phoenix-like story.²⁶³ Coverage of the christening ceremony explicitly linked the past and present with a photograph that showed two veterans from the battleship standing alongside Captain Harvey and Admiral Campbell.²⁶⁴ Commemorative prints sold at the commissioning showed the new submarine sailing side-by-side with the battleship.²⁶⁵ The linked memory of the battleship and the discourse about the submarine made the new *West Virginia* the latest defender of freedom.

The memories of the Second World War likewise echoed with the appointment of the Governor's Commissioning Committee. West Virginia Governor Gaston Caperton created the special committee to oversee the logistics of the commissioning ceremony.²⁶⁶ To head up the group, Caperton appointed prominent citizen C.E. "Bert" Goodwin.²⁶⁷ Goodwin hailed from the small West Virginia town of Ripley, a place where, during the

²⁶² "History of USS West Virginia (BB48)," Vertical Files: Military...Naval Ships...USS West Virginia, West Virginia State Archives, Charleston, WV.

²⁶³ See, Vertical Files: Military...Naval Ship...USS West Virginia, West Virginia State Archives, Charleston, WV.

²⁶⁴ "State's Special Day," *Charleston Daily Mail*, October 16, 1989.

²⁶⁵ WHF Papers and Photographs.

²⁶⁶ *USS West Virginia Commissioning Book*, WHF Papers and Photographs.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Depression, young men spent free time playing “kick-the-can at night and chas[ing]...girls into dark places.”²⁶⁸ When war came to the isolated town in December 1941, Goodwin burst through the doors of the local Episcopal Church shouting, “The goddamned Japs have bombed Pearl Harbor!”²⁶⁹ Goodwin remembered well the treachery of “sneaky” tactics and would not have been party to a group promoting an underhanded weapon. As such, his presence on the committee reveals the changed perception of submarines. Serving as Goodwin’s co-chair was Hershel “Woody” Williams, a native born West Virginian and former Marine. During the fighting on Iwo Jima in 1945 Williams took out several enemy pillboxes single-handedly; for his actions, Williams received the Medal of Honor.²⁷⁰ As with Goodwin, Williams’ “stamp of approval” demonstrates that the popular perception of submarines during the period was one of an honorable vessel that defended freedom.

Throughout the late-1980s, ordinary West Virginians also found ways to leave their imprint on the history of the new Trident submarine. Across the state, public school students worked feverishly to design and draw the *West Virginia*’s logo.²⁷¹ The design submitted by sixteen-year-old Jason Barnard, a junior at Washington Irving High School in Clarksburg, beat out over a thousand other entries in the competition.²⁷² Barnard’s winning logo featured an eagle clutching a rhododendron flower set against a background

²⁶⁸ Harold E. “Punk” Starcher, interview by author, Ripley, WV, January 20, 2009, interview 2B.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Matthew R. McGrew, “Hershel W. Williams,” in James H. Willbanks, ed., *America’s Heroes: Medal of Honor Recipients from the Civil War to Iraq* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2011).

²⁷¹ “Teen Who Designed Sub Logo Is Submerged In Work,” *Register/Herald* (Beckley, WV), October 15, 1989.

²⁷² Ibid.

of mountains. To the artist, the state's flower represented West Virginia's beauty and the eagle embodied freedom.²⁷³ On the other end of the state, workers at the family-owned Casto and Harris book manufacturer in Spencer toiled away to create a special visitor's log.²⁷⁴ The log, weighing fourteen pounds and measuring 71"x13"x2.5", kept four artisans busy for some twenty hours. With an estimated value of \$800-\$1000, the memento boasted five hundred linen pages with hand-sown leather binding and marble edging. The president of Casto and Harris, Clay Miller III, had the honor of presenting the log to the ship's company at the commissioning ceremony.²⁷⁵

Even the flavors of West Virginia found prominent roles at the formal exercises. Russ Tuckwiller, owner of the Charleston-based restaurant Esquire, oversaw the food planning for the commissioning in Kings Bay, Georgia.²⁷⁶ The logistics of feeding an expected five thousand attendees included "dispatching a refrigerated truck with 1,500 pounds of meat including 300 pounds of country ham."²⁷⁷ Because approximately one-fifth of those in attendance would be West Virginians, Tuckwiller wanted to feature state dishes, including: smoked ham, roast beef, biscuits, rolls, Tuckwiller's homemade sausage, sausage from Mama Jarroll's Country Road Inn (Summersville, WV), West Virginia-grown apples, brown beans and cornbread, and local Briar Run goat cheese.²⁷⁸

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ "U.S.S. West Virginia Log Book Handmade in State," *Register* (Point Pleasant), October 20, 1990.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ "W.Va. Food To Go Overland For Submarine's Sendoff," *Charleston Gazette*, October 18, 1990.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

The all-important christening champagne came from Hampshire County, courtesy of the West Virginia Grape Growers' Association.²⁷⁹ Officials at General Dynamics, Electric Boat Division – the traditional builders of navy submarines – took great pains to ensure that the special Hampshire bubbly did its job. After enjoying morning coffee on the day of the christening, ship's sponsor Erma Byrd took a few practice swings with a wooden bottle.²⁸⁰ For the actual christening, Mrs. Byrd used a pre-cracked bottle wrapped in a protective mesh netting. "If by chance the bottle would not break, there is a standby bottle that will be immediately broken on the ship to insure the Christening has taken place."²⁸¹ The planners left nothing to chance.

Amidst the pomp and circumstance of the christening and commissioning, the submarine's mission was clear. Kelly Jaeger agreed with the *Hampshire Review's* observation that the submarine was "part of the first line of defense of our country," noting that "that's our job – to stay at sea and be submerged, undetected, for the largest amount of time possible."²⁸² At the ship's christening, Senator Byrd admonished, "If we ever were to launch the missiles of the *West Virginia*, our basic goal, to deter war, would have failed."²⁸³

The same year of *West Virginia's* commissioning (1990), audiences across the country experienced the beginning of a submarine film revival. In March, executives at

²⁷⁹ "State's Special Day," *Charleston Daily Mail*, October 16, 1989; and "New Construction Status Report Number Five, 10 September 1989," USS West Virginia, Byrd Collection.

²⁸⁰ "Commissioning Ceremony, Tentative Schedule, 9-18-89," USS West Virginia, Byrd Collection. Despite its title, the document is actually a proposed schedule for the Christening of *West Virginia*.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² "Doing His Job – USS WV," *Hampshire Review*, October 17, 1990.

²⁸³ "State's Special Day," *Charleston Daily Mail*, October 16, 1989.

Paramount Pictures released the much-anticipated on-screen adaptation of Tom Clancy's bestseller, *The Hunt for Red October*.²⁸⁴ When a new Soviet submarine called *Red October* puts to sea in 1984, CIA analyst Jack Ryan (Alec Baldwin) rushes to ascertain the purpose of the mysterious doors located at the ship's bow and stern. Shortly after learning that the doors house a nearly-silent propulsion system that would render it capable of thwarting the country's first-warning systems, Ryan finds himself giving a top-secret briefing to the president's National Security Advisor Jeffrey Pelt (Richard Jordan). Acting on intelligence that the ship's captain, Marko Ramius (Sean Connery), has gone rogue and intends to fire his ballistic missiles at the United States, the joint chiefs at the meeting decide they must protect their shores at all costs. Ryan offers an alternative scenario – Ramius could be defecting! Secretly, NSA Pelt orders Ryan into the field, giving him forty-eight hours to prove his theory and intercept the *Red October* before the Soviet fleet could do the same. The movie took audiences through an action-packed race against time that helped bridge the gap between submarine discourse and late-Cold War reality.

The Hunt for Red October brought with it a message of peace to an America that had endured forty long years of the Cold War. While Ryan and retired submariner Skip Tyler (Jeffrey Jones) discuss the implications of *Red October*'s silent capabilities, Tyler's character invokes past and present fears of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD).

When I was twelve, I helped my daddy build a bomb shelter in our basement because some fool parked a dozen warheads ninety miles off the coast of Florida. This thing could park a couple a hundred warheads off Washington or

²⁸⁴ *The Hunt for Red October*, directed by John McTiernan, Paramount Pictures, 1990.

New York, and no one would know anything about it till it was all over.²⁸⁵

The memories of the Cuban Missile Crisis and the senselessness of nuclear war are evident in Tyler's words. After Ryan classifies *Red October* as a potential first-strike weapon, an older admiral on the Joint Chiefs of Staff hangs his head saying, "God-damned thing's made to start a war."²⁸⁶ The admiral's age suggests that he had lived through previous war(s) and was fearful of a new one characterized by the use of nuclear weapons. Aboard the aircraft carrier *Enterprise*, Admiral Painter (Fred Thompson) assesses the dangers of having the American and Soviet fleets in close proximity to one another. "This business will get out of control. It will get out of control, and we'll be lucky to live through it."²⁸⁷ The film placed the precarious nature of living in a MAD world in the foreground of Cold War submarine discourse.

Sean Connery's portrayal of Captain Marko Ramius similarly invoked the perception that the arms race had long since grown futile and perilous. Ramius tells his crew that they play "a dangerous game – a game of chess against our old adversary, the American Navy."²⁸⁸ Privately, Ramius' executive officer and co-defector Vasili Borodin (Sam Neil) talks with the captain about his ambitions for living a free life in America. When Borodin asks the captain about his future plans in their new home, Ramius thinks for a minute before quietly replying:

I miss the peace of fishing – like when I was a boy. Forty years I've been at sea. A war at sea. A war with no battles,

²⁸⁵ Ibid., Dry Docks scene.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., NSA Briefing scene.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., *Enterprise* Flight Deck scene.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., Sailing Orders scene.

no monuments – only casualties. I widowed her the day I
 married her. My wife died while I was at sea, you
 know?²⁸⁹

Ramius' description of his war at sea, representing the larger Cold War, painted a dark picture of a war that was devoid of all recognizable symbols, save for the dead. At the movie's end, Ramius finally reveals to Ryan his reasons for defecting. According to the captain, there were individuals in Russia who believed that the only way to settle tensions with America was with a massive attack – "*Red October* was built for that purpose."²⁹⁰ In messianic fashion, Ramius sacrificed his life, career, and homeland to save the world from absolute destruction.

Despite *Red October*'s strong message of peace, it also reinforced the dominant cultural perception of American submarines as the country's first line of defense. In the film, American submarine *USS Dallas*²⁹¹ first detects *Red October* coming out of port. When the Soviet submarine's crew activates their new propulsion system, sonar equipment aboard the *Dallas* loses the ability to track *Red October*. After spending hours filtering through sea-generated sound, sonar technician Seaman Jones (Courtney Vance) figures out how to track the untraceable submarine. Jones' determination and good ole American know-how prove smarter than high-tech sonar gear, and he also correctly anticipates *Red October*'s course. The fictional Seaman Jones represented real American submariners whose technical skills and abilities to adapt, overcome, and improvise guarded the country's spheres of influence. Later, when Ryan and a few members of

²⁸⁹ Ibid., Future Plans scene.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., Closing scene.

²⁹¹ The fictional *Dallas* was a *Los Angeles*-class attack submarine designed to fire Tomahawk cruise missiles, different from the ICBMs launched from submarines of the *Ohio*-class.

Dallas's crew board the *Red October*, they come under torpedo attack from another Soviet submarine, the *Konovalov*. While Ryan and Ramius search for a saboteur, *Dallas* Captain Bart Mancuso (Scott Glenn) takes command of *Red October*. Having no way to fire his torpedoes, Mancuso must beat the *Konovalov* with grit and nerves of steel alone. Although the ensuing undersea battle was less far-fetched than Chuck Norris round-housing Vietnam into submission, the point was clear – give an American a free hand, and he will find a way to win.

American submarines of the Cold War were the right weapons, at the right time, under the right conditions. Postwar scholarship and popular memory – joined together by Theodore Roscoe, Edward Beach, and Hollywood – created an historical precedent of honorable American submarines and submariners. Nuclear proliferation and the potential for mutually assured destruction provided a niche for advanced submarine technologies. As the navy's censorship of Samuel Flagg Bemis protected the submarine's fragile reputation in the early 1960s, so too the symbolic joining of Trident submarines with states' names in the latter years of the Cold War ensured that American submarines continued to enjoy an illustrious reputation. But ultimately, the golden age of the submarine could not endure without a purpose.

The commissioning of the *West Virginia* and the production of *The Hunt for Red October* marked the last years of The Flagship of Freedom. With the official dissolution of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991 came a cultural uncertainty that chipped away at the clearly-defined discourse birthed by the Cold War and the threat of nuclear attack. The submarine revival in Hollywood initiated by *Red October* continued throughout the 1990s and into the early 2000s, but it also revealed a diverse cultural perception of

submarines. Unlike the decade of the submarine during the 1950s, this new interest in the vessels included a wide array of films that were serious, comedic, historically-based, and fantastic. For example, the 1996 comedy *Down Periscope* directly juxtaposed – in both title and content – the more straight-forward Second World War-based film *Up Periscope* from 1959.²⁹² Much like the interwar and Second World War periods, the post-Cold War years initiated a search for identity. Without a clearly defined threat, submarines lost their purpose.

²⁹² *Down Periscope*, directed by David S. Ward, Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, 1996; and, *Up Periscope*, directed by Gordon Douglas, Warner Brothers Pictures, 1959.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The historian has no crystal ball. As he approaches the
 cresting edge of history's wave, he must fall silent.

~ Paul Boyer, 1985²⁹³

The cultural discourse about and the historical realities of American submarine warfare did not occur in a vacuum. Although this particular study does have a definite beginning and end, the historical phenomenon explored herein does not. For centuries prior to the First World War, humanity gazed across the surface of the sea and wondered what lies beneath. And indeed, it is farcical to presume that the human fascination with the earth's oceans will magically cease at some distant point in the future. But what makes the American cultural experience with submarines in the twentieth century so fascinating is the fluidity and flexibility shown by both public perceptions and official policy making. Americans saw no inherent contradiction in reprimanding Germany for its use of USW and then adopting the same practice some twenty years later. In large part, the difference between First World War abhorrence and Second World War acquiescence derived from perceptions about the men inside submarines – evil Germans versus noble Americans. Yet in the Cold War, quiet acceptance turned to exuberant acclamation as submarines held the key to maintaining some measure of world peace, at least when it came to preventing the absolute destruction promised by nuclear holocaust. Instead of mere changes in political and military policies and doctrines, the moves from victims to users to noble defenders represent dramatic cultural shifts that took years, if not decades, to form.

²⁹³ Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light*, 367.

Even today, the public perception and strategic role of American submarines continue to evolve. Since the end of the Cold War, the navy has retro-fitted four of the original *Ohio*-class Trident submarines with cruise missiles for use in strategic air strikes, such as the recent 2011 Libyan Civil War. Continued nuclear proliferation and ever-straining relations with countries like North Korea and Iran, however, have also allowed true Trident submarines like the *West Virginia* to partially resume Cold War roles of deterrence. While the submarine's story cannot definitively predict the future of weapons development and deployment, it does reveal the importance of cultural influences on war making. And, to a point, the history of American submarines illustrates how the need for national security during wartime (e.g., the secrecy of the Silent Service) can spill over into the postwar world, railroading intellectual freedom to protect public opinion of new weapons (e.g., Bemis' censorship and deployment of *Polaris* submarines).

Military applications of submarines, however, only tell part of the story. The dream of submerged vehicles did not begin, nor will it end, with the desire to fashion new weapons of war. One only needs to turn on a television in today's world to find examples of the scientific advances brought about by modern submarines. The Discovery Channel, Animal Planet, the History Channel, and Public Broadcasting networks all air programs in which scientists explore the deep in privately-owned one- or two-man submersibles. Documentaries about Robert Ballard's discovery of the *Titanic* shipwreck, or even Hollywood's fictional love story *Titanic*, all reinforce the wondrous potential of undersea exploration. Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* has been the subject of five full-length films bearing the same name, not to mention that Captain Nemo and *Nautilus* have appeared in at least four other films. Popular culture often likens traveling

underwater in a submarine to the experience of “sailing” through deep space. Even weapons aboard the Starship *Enterprise* bear the names of their submerged counterparts – torpedoes. These are all examples of current cultural outlets for submarine discourse. While cultural discourse about, as well as that permeated by submarines continues, the on-the-ground reactions to that discourse will only become visible in the decades to come. When that happens, the newly dominant cultural identity will become part of the larger historical trend that gave birth to preceding perceptions of submarines, and the process will continue indefinitely.

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